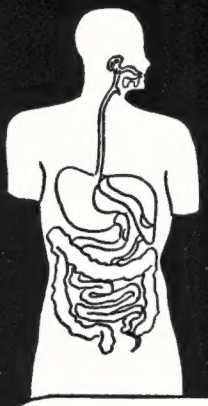
10¢
COMPLETE QUICK-TRIGGER STORIES
POPULAR
MAR.
WESTERN
A THRILLING PUBLICATION
LAST OF THE GUN TRIBE
An Exciting Action Novel
By DEAN OWEN
THE PHANTOM STAGECOACH
A Sheriff Blue Steele Novelet
By TOM GUNN

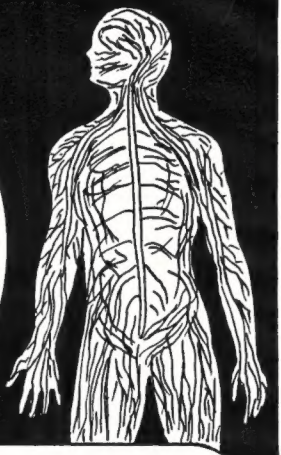
READING TIME—LESS THAN FOUR FASCINATING MINUTES

MODERN PUBLISHING MIRACLE...



Famous

FAMILY HOME MEDICAL GUIDE



$1.00

Identical in Subject Matter—Contains All the Original Pictures, All the Important Charts and Tables

New streamlined books for a new age . . . by mass-production methods! That's the explanation of this sensational publishing feat—an authoritative 652-page, $5.00 Medical Guide in a new, easy-to-read, big-page version at the price of a couple of good movie tickets!

Over 100,000 Copies Sold Already

Presses Kept Rolling To Meet Demands

Yes, Mr. and Mrs. America know a real bargain when they see it. The continuing shortage of doctors makes a trustworthy medical guide more than ever a vital home need. You never know when sickness or accident may strike. And what you do or fail to do while waiting for the doctor may *save* . . . or *cost* a life.

Covers Diseases Of Children As Well As Grown-Ups

The Family Home MEDICAL GUIDE covers the entire field of sickness and disease—children's ailments as well as those of grown-ups. Diseases of the Eye, Ear, Nose and Throat. Diseases of the Lungs and Air Passages. Infectious Diseases. Diseases of the Stomach, Liver, Intestines, Gall Bladder, Appendix. Diseases of the Heart, Blood, and Blood Vessels. Diseases of the Kidney, Bladder, Prostate. Skin Diseases, Nervous Diseases, Dietary Diseases. Women's Diseases, Gland Diseases. And through it all, PREVENTION is stressed, as well as symptoms and treatment.

Symptoms Indexed For Instant Reference

The instantaneous index-by-symptoms is one of the most helpful features of this great family health aid. A quick glance directs you to the right page. There you find the common causes discussed, the symptoms explained. You are told what to do. You are warned what *not* to do. Not a precious moment is wasted.

25 Important Tables

The 25 valuable tables in the Family Home MEDICAL GUIDE are indexed conveniently by both number and page. They provide compact data on such matters as Artificial Feeding Formulas, Normal Blood Pressure, Food Portion Calories, Diets, Food Groups, Pulse Rates, Poisons and Antidotes. These Tables are accurate, authoritative.

Over 100 Pictures

The Family Home MEDICAL GUIDE is written in plain, simple language that anyone can understand. To make the subject-matter even clearer, more than 100 medically correct illustrations are used. In addition, there are 4 full-length anatomical charts in color.

MAIL COUPON WITH $1.00 TODAY!

MONEY-BACK OFFER

Yes, and no strings attached. Simply mail your order and enclose $1.00. When your copy arrives examine its wealth of information, its 100 pictures, its 25 important Tables, and all its other valuable features. Then, if you feel that this great book isn't worth many times its cost, as insurance alone, just return it and your dollar will be promptly refunded.

WILCOX & FOLLETT CO.

Chicago 5 • Since 1873 • Illinois

WILCOX AND FOLLETT, Publishers,
1255 S. Wabash Ave., Chicago 5, Ill. Dept. B

Gentlemen: I enclose $1.00 for my copy of the Family Home MEDICAL GUIDE on your liberal money-back offer. Please send it at once.

NAME..... .....
(Print Name)

STREET.....

CITY..... STATE.....

Mark Whether Money Order..... or Cash.....

We Give You America's Greatest Billfold Bargain!

It's Smart Roomy and LOW PRICED!

IT "ZIPS" ALL THE WAY AROUND

Clear-View Celluloid Windows

MASTERPIECE of BILLFOLD Design and Workmanship

Exterior Of These Billfolds Are Made Of Such Beautiful, Smart Leathers As SADDLE - MOROCCO - CALFSKIN

3 Big Values for One Low Price $1.98

You Must Be 100% Satisfied Or Your Money Will Be Cheerfully Refunded

- **SMART ZIPPER LEATHER BILLFOLD AND PASS CASE**
- **LARGE, BUILT-IN CHANGE PURSE**
- **Genuine RABBIT'S FOOT KEY-HOLDER** Complete with FLEXIBLE GILT CHAIN

What a sensational offer! And what a marvelous value! This is the first time in our history we've ever given a smart leather, genuine all-around Zipper Billfold for the unheard of low price of only $1.98. Ordinarily you would have to pay that price for just the usual type billfold with no zipper. Yet on this bargain offer we not only give you this beautifully styled Zipper Billfold, which is a remarkable value in itself, but you also get two other great features — 3 BIG VALUES in *all* for ONE LOW PRICE! You can't beat an offer like that. You'll agree when you see this Billfold that it's the best ever.

Here, without a doubt, is the last word in a real man's billfold — it has a place for everything. It "zips open all the way" so that currency, change, passes and membership cards can be reached easy and fast. Yet when closed you can shake the billfold all you want and nothing can fall out. So handy! So safe! Remember as an extra special feature we also include America's most popular genuine Rabbit's Foot Key-Holder, complete with gilt Chain as shown. But hurry while there's still time. SEND NO MONEY! Just rush your order on the handy coupon below today on our 10 Day Examination Offer.

This Genuine RABBIT'S FOOT KEYHOLDER Included With Every Zipper Billfold!

Some people put a great deal of faith in the symbolic magic of a rabbit's foot. They feel that it acts as a good omen. Even if you aren't superstitious, you'll find that this rabbit's foot makes a mighty good key holder. It's novel. It's handy. It's a genuine rabbit's foot with real fur and everything. The picture shows the rabbit's foot about actual size. Comes complete with a generous gilt chain, flexible and large enough to accommodate all your keys.

RUSH YOUR ORDER FIRST COME FIRST SERVED

SEND NO MONEY — RUSH THIS COUPON!

ILLINOIS MERCHANDISE MART, Dept. 3305
510 N. Dearborn St., Chicago 10, Illinois

Gentlemen: Rush me your 3 Big Values as described including Zipper Pass Case Billfold, Built-in Change Purse and Rabbit's Foot Key Holder with Gilt Chain. On arrival, I will pay postman only $1.98 plus 20% Fed. Tax and few cents postage and c.o.d. charges. If not delighted in every way I can return in 10 days for full refund.

Name _____

Address _____

Town _____ State _____

☐ To save shipping charges I am enclosing in advance $1.98 plus 20% Federal Tax (Total $2.38). Please ship above order all postage charges prepaid.

POPULAR WESTERN

Vol. XXX, No. 2 EVERY STORY BRAND NEW March, 1946

A Complete Action Novel

LAST OF THE GUN TRIBE

By DEAN OWEN

The lone survivor of a family branded as owlhoots, young Jed Agnew fights against tremendous odds as he strives to clear his name and deliver vengeance to those who framed him! 13

Two Full-Length Novelets

THE PHANTOM STAGECOACH.....Tom Gunn 32

When Magpie Stevens vanishes, Sheriff Steele and Deputy Watts question some proddy outlaws—and get their answers in gunsmoke!

A WAR FOR CAPTAIN WALLACE.....Jackson Cole 56

A brave cavalry officer defies the lawless element of Sturhan City as he battles against hostile Indians and white renegades!

Short Stories

HAM AND VEGETABLES.....Alfred L. Garry 48

It's steak versus spinach when Deputy Ham rivals Moccasin Joe

BARREL OF TROUBLE.....Charles Alan Gregory 67

Accused of robbery, Dan Barton must choose between jail and Boot Hill

THE SPIRIT OF LOST RIVER.....Scott Carleton 73

Buffalo Billy Bates discovers the secret of the valley

SHERIFF SIGN.....Mel Pitzer 84

Old Sheriff Bill Browder's cleverness is a weapon in his deputy's hands

and

THE HOME CORRAL.....Doc Long Trail 6

An entertaining and informative department for readers

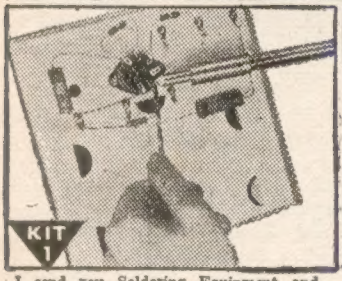
POPULAR WESTERN, published every other month by Better Publications, Inc., at 10 East 40th Street, New York 16, N. Y. N. L. Pines, President. Subscription (12 issues), $1.20; single copies, $.10. Foreign and Canadian postage extra. Reentered as second-class matter March 21, 1938, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879.
Copyrighted, 1946, by Better Publications, Inc.
Manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by self-addressed, stamped envelopes, and are submitted at the author's risk. In corresponding with this publication, please include your postal zone number, if any. Names of all characters used in stories and semi-fiction articles are fictitious. If the name of any living person or existing institution is used, it is fictitious.

Read our companion magazines: Thrilling Western, Thrilling Ranch Stories, Thrilling Wonder Stories, Thrilling Sports, Thrilling Love, Thrilling Mystery Novel Magazine, Thrilling Detective, Thrilling Football, Popular Detective, Popular Sports Magazine, Popular Love, Popular Football, Texas Rangers, G-Men Detective, Sky Fighters, The Phantom Detective, Everyday Astrology, West, Detective Novel Magazine, Masked Rider Western, Range Riders Western, The Rio Kid Western, Black Book Detective, Startling Stories, Popular Crossword Puzzles, Best Crossword Puzzles, Rodeo Romances, Exciting Love, Exciting Sports, and Exciting Western.

PRINTED IN THE U. S. A.

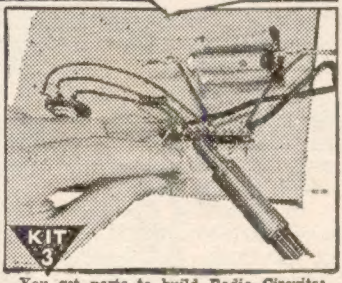
I Will Show You How to Learn RADIO by Practicing in Spare Time

I Send You 6 Big Kits of Radio Parts

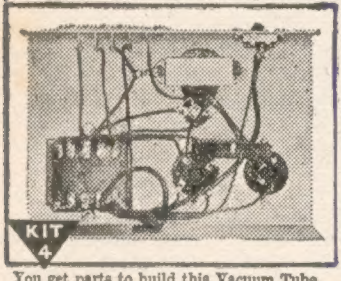


I send you Soldering Equipment and Radio Parts; show you how to do Radio soldering; how to mount and connect Radio parts; give you practical experience.

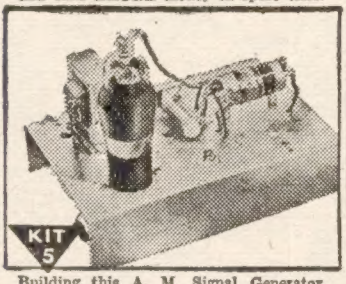
Early in my course I show you how to build this N.R.I. Tester with parts I send. It soon helps you fix neighborhood Radios and earn EXTRA money in spare time.



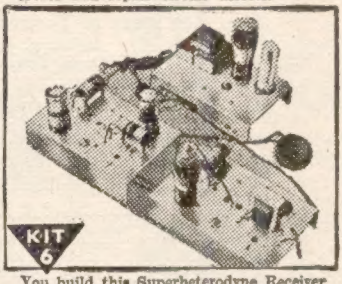
You get parts to build Radio Circuits; then test them; see how they work; learn how to design special circuits; how to locate and repair circuit defects.



You get parts to build this Vacuum Tube Power Pack; make changes which give you experience with packs of many kinds; learn to correct power pack troubles.



Building this A. M. Signal Generator gives you more valuable experience. It provides amplitude-modulated signals for many tests and experiments.



You build this Superheterodyne Receiver which brings in local and distant stations—and gives you more experience to help you win success in Radio.

KNOW RADIO—*Win Success*

I Will Train You at Home—SAMPLE LESSON FREE

Send coupon for FREE Sample Lesson, "Getting Acquainted with Receiver Servicing," and FREE 64-page book, "Win Rich Rewards in Radio." See how N.R.I. trains you at home. Read how you practice building, testing, repairing RADIOS with SIX BIG KITS of Radio parts I send you.

Future for Trained Men is Bright in Radio, Television, Electronics

The Radio Repair business is booming NOW. Fixing Radios pays good money as a spare time or full time business. Trained Radio Technicians also find wide-open opportunities in Police, Aviation, Marine Radio, in Broadcasting, Radio Manufacturing, Public Address work, etc. Think of the boom coming now that Radios can be made!

My Course Includes Training in

TELEVISION • ELECTRONICS

Think of even *greater* opportunities when Television and Electronics are available to the public!

Many Beginners Soon Make $5, $10 a Week EXTRA in Spare Time

The day you enroll I start sending EXTRA MONEY JOB SHEETS to help you make EXTRA money fixing Radios in spare time while learning.

MAIL COUPON for sample lesson and 64-page book FREE. It's packed with facts about opportunities for you. Read about my Course. Read letters from men I trained, telling what they are doing, earning. MAIL COUPON in envelope or paste on penny postal. J. E. Smith, President, Dept. 6C09, National Radio Institute, *Pioneer Home Study Radio School*, Washington 9, D. C.

OUR 31st YEAR OF TRAINING MEN FOR SUCCESS IN RADIO

Good for Both—FREE

MR. J. E. SMITH, President, Dept. 6C09
National Radio Institute, Washington 9, D. C.

Mail me FREE, your sample lesson and 64-page book. (No salesman will call. Please write plainly.)

Name .....Age.....

Address .....

City .....State 4FR
(Please include Post Office Zone Number)

The HOME CORRAL

A DEPARTMENT FOR READERS

CONDUCTED BY

DOC LONG TRAIL

HOWDY, hombres and hombresses! So somebody's been telling you that the old West is a thing of the past? Just lives on in story books, huh? Well, grab yoreselves a roost on the corral fence and listen to me enthuse about Oregon's "outlaw county" and a real, hell-for-leather frontier along Rogue River!

In times past I've spread my soogans hither and yon along the Rogue and told you about it in these get-togethers. But never the whole story. That was because it takes more'n one-two seasons to know.

A Heap of Territory

When you say Rogue River, you take in a heap of territory. Here's a western river that flows through four different kinds of country before it enters the sea. Yessir, the Rogue lives four lives between its source, near Crater Lake National Park, and its

mouth at a place on the map named Gold Beach.

1. It's a wild mountain stream, leaping down from rugged, snowy Cascades summits.

2. Bridged and tamed, it meanders through a settled valley around Grant's Pass.

3. It goes wild again, forming a torrent in a long gorge that splits the Coast Range. A dangerous passage that boats rarely attempt.

4. The last stage of its strange existence is where it broadens on its approach to tidewater and mingles with the Pacific at a windswept inlet, famous for salmon fishing.

It's the lower Rogue I aim to tell you about now, and this "outlaw" Curry County in the southwest corner of Oregon, the southerly boundary forming the Oregon-California line.

Rugged and densely timbered, it's the most remote and unsettled bailiwick out West. Contains only two towns, Gold Beach and Port Orford, population about 500 each. Yet a county big enough to cover the Detroit-Toledo-Cleveland section back East. Or roughly the size of Connecticut.

The "Outlaw" County

There's not a mile of surfaced road in all the Curry County wilderness except Coast Highway Route 101. The river is a highway for the few ranchers, who live along the river. Nearly all Curry County is Siskiyou National Forest, which means it won't ever be settled up.

Why do they call this the "outlaw" county? Not because it's infested with bad hombres. The opposite is true. Curry County folks are an uncommonly fine lot, mostly of the pioneer breed. They're "outlaws" because they've bucked development and crave to keep their natural wonderland like it is and always has been.

So far, they've won. There may come a day when a highway will be blasted through, east and west, the forest logged and burned as in more "progressive" regions, and the game driven out. But that'll be a long, long time yet.

So long as Curry County stays primitive and untouched, it'll be an attraction for many years for folks that hanker for a glimpse of the genuine, primitive West.

Appearances Are Deceiving

You'd think, from a look at Gold Beach as you pass through on your way north or south, that the region hasn't any resources

(Continued on page 8)

THERE is a definite I.C.S. type. The records of 100,000 current students . . . more than 5 million students since 1891 . . . supply the outlines. Here's how the typical enrollee shapes up at the time of beginning his studies:

He is an adult. In good times or bad times, he is an employed man. Circumstances have prevented his attending a college but he is ambitious, intelligent, determined to acquire the specialized training that will help him in his present job and prepare him for a better one.

Does the description fit *you?* Then you'll be interested in what I.C.S. helps these students to achieve. In a single 30-day period we have received as many as 635 student letters reporting advancement in salary and position. In a period of 120 days we have received 1,920 such reports.

Graduates include the presidents, board chairmen, chief engineers or chief chemists of some of the largest steel, airplane, chemical, railroad and electrical equipment companies in the country. Thousands of others have registered substantial successes in their chosen fields. Here's the kind of coupon they signed and mailed.

are you the I. C. S. type of man?

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS

ICS

BOX 3966-F, SCRANTON 9, PENNA.

Without cost or obligation, please send me full particulars about the course *before* which I have marked X:

Air Conditioning and Plumbing Courses
- ☐ Air Conditioning
- ☐ Heating ☐ Plumbing
- ☐ Refrigeration ☐ Steam Fitting

Chemistry Courses
- ☐ Chemical Engineering
- ☐ Chemistry, Analytical
- ☐ Chemistry, Industrial
- ☐ Chemistry, Mfg. Iron & Steel
- ☐ Petroleum Refining ☐ Plastics
- ☐ Pulp and Paper Making

Civil Engineering, Architectural and Mining Courses
- ☐ Architectural Drafting
- ☐ Architecture
- ☐ Bridge and Building Foreman
- ☐ Building Estimating
- ☐ Civil Engineering ☐ Coal Mining
- ☐ Contracting and Building
- ☐ Highway Engineering
- ☐ Lumber Dealer
- ☐ Reading Structural Blueprints
- ☐ Sanitary Engineering
- ☐ Structural Drafting
- ☐ Structural Engineering
- ☐ Surveying and Mapping

Electrical Courses
- ☐ Electrical Drafting
- ☐ Electrical Engineering
- ☐ Power House Electric
- ☐ Practical Electrician
- ☐ Practical Telephony
- ☐ Telegraph Engineering

Internal Combustion Engines Courses
- ☐ Auto Technician ☐ Aviation
- ☐ Diesel-Electric
- ☐ Diesel Engines ☐ Gas Engines

Mechanical Courses
- ☐ Aeronautical Engineering
- ☐ Airplane Drafting
- ☐ Flight Engineer
- ☐ Foundry Work
- ☐ Heat Treatment of Metals
- ☐ Industrial Engineering
- ☐ Industrial Metallurgy
- ☐ Mechanical Drafting
- ☐ Mechanical Engineering
- ☐ Mold-Loft Work
- ☐ Patternmaking
- ☐ Reading Shop Blueprints
- ☐ Sheet-Metal Drafting
- ☐ Sheet-Metal Worker
- ☐ Ship Drafting
- ☐ Ship Fitting
- ☐ Shop Practice
- ☐ Steel Mill Workers
- ☐ Tool Designing
- ☐ Welding, Gas and Electric

Radio Courses
- ☐ Electronics
- ☐ Radio, General
- ☐ Radio Operating
- ☐ Radio Servicing

Railroad Courses
- ☐ Air Brake ☐ Car Inspector
- ☐ Locomotive Engineer
- ☐ Locomotive Fireman
- ☐ Railroad Section Foreman

Steam Engineering Courses
- ☐ Boilermaking
- ☐ Combustion Engineering
- ☐ Engine Running
- ☐ Marine Engineering
- ☐ Steam Electric
- ☐ Steam Engines

Textile Courses
- ☐ Cotton Manufacturing
- ☐ Rayon Weaving
- ☐ Textile Designing
- ☐ Woolen Manufacturing

Business and Academic Courses
- ☐ Accounting ☐ Advertising
- ☐ Arithmetic ☐ Bookkeeping
- ☐ Business Correspondence
- ☐ Business Management
- ☐ Certified Public Accounting
- ☐ College Preparatory
- ☐ Commercial
- ☐ Cost Accounting
- ☐ Federal Tax
- ☐ First Year College
- ☐ Foremanship
- ☐ French
- ☐ Good English
- ☐ High School
- ☐ Higher Mathematics
- ☐ Illustrating
- ☐ Motor Traffic
- ☐ Postal Service
- ☐ Salesmanship
- ☐ Secretarial
- ☐ Sign Lettering ☐ Spanish
- ☐ Stenography
- ☐ Traffic Management

Name..... Age..... Home Address.....

Present Working

City..... State..... Position..... Hours ..... A.M. to..... P.M.

Canadian residents send coupon to International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Ltd., Montreal, Canada.

British residents send coupon to I. C. S., 71 Kingsway, London, W. C. 2, England.

DISCOUNT TO DISCHARGED VETERANS—SPECIAL TUITION RATES FOR MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES

"YOU ARE UNDER ARREST!"

There's a Thrill in Bringing a Crook to Justice Through Scientific

CRIME DETECTION

I have taught thousands of men and women this exciting, profitable, pleasant profession. Let me teach you, too, in your own home. Prepare yourself in your leisure time to fill a responsible, steady, well-paid position in a very short time and at very small cost. What others have done, you too, can do.

53% of All American Identification Bureaus

Be A FINGER PRINT Expert

Employ students or graduates of I.A.S. This fascinating work is easy to learn and the training is inexpensive. You, too, can fit yourself to fill a responsible crime detection job with good pay and steady employment. But don't delay —get the details now. Let me show you how easily and completely I can prepare you for this fascinating work, during spare time, in your own home. You may pay as you learn. Write today for free Crime Book.

FREE! "THE BLUE BOOK OF CRIME"

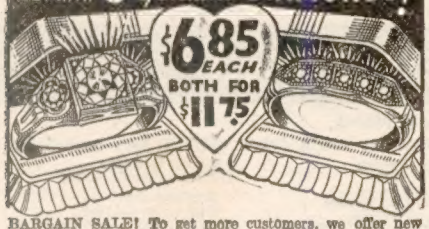
It's a thriller. Tells about some of the most interesting crimes ever perpetrated and how they were solved through the very methods taught by I.A.S. Send now—be sure to state age.

INSTITUTE OF APPLIED SCIENCE

Dept. 7963 1920 Sunnyside Ave., Chicago 40, Illinois

14 KARAT GOLD BRIDAL PAIR

SET WITH 8 Genuine DIAMONDS!



BARGAIN SALE! To get more customers, we offer new guaranteed 14K GOLD Genuine chip diamond matched Bridal Pair. The engagement ring (sweetheart design) is set with 8 sparkling, genuine diamonds in exquisite mounting. Matching this ring in elegant harmony is a lovely 14K GOLD Wedding Ring, deeply embossed, set with 5 genuine diamonds. These precious and dazzling rings will thrill you beyond your fondest expectations. Comes in lovely gift box.

Send No Money—10 Day Trial

WRITTEN GUARANTEE WITH EVERY RING

Wear 10 days on Money Back Guarantee. Send name, and ring size. Either ring only $6.85 or both (the perfect pair) for only $11.75, sizes 4½ to 8. (Sizes 8½ and larger, 75c per ring extra.) Pay postman C.O.D. on arrival, plus postage and tax. Supply is limited, so write today.

International Diamond Co., 2251 Calumet Ave., Dept. 444, Chicago 16, Ill.

ANY PHOTO ENLARGED

Size 8 x 10 Inches on DOUBLE-WEIGHT PAPER

57¢

Same price for full length or bust form, groups, landscapes, pet animals, etc., or enlargements of any part of group picture.

Original returned with your enlargement.

3 for $1.25

SEND NO MONEY Just mail photo, negative or snapshot (any size) and receive your enlargement, guaranteed fadeless, on beautiful double-weight portrait quality paper. Pay postman 57c plus postage—or send 59c with order and we pay postage. Take advantage of this amazing offer now. Send your photos today.

PROFESSIONAL ART STUDIOS

100 East Ohio Street Dept. 406-C Chicago (11), Ill.

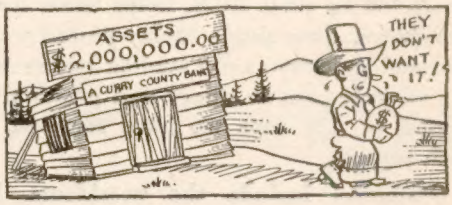
THE HOME CORRAL

(Continued from page 6)

at all except tourist money, and that the natives are poor. For it's hardly even a town. Just a ramshackle collection of a few stores and homes pasted against a steep slope.

But appearances are deceiving, folks. That little square brick building, the Curry County Bank, had about $700,000 on deposit four-five years back. Now deposits are two million. Mostly on account of small, unique enterprises.

It's the heart of the myrtlewood belt. This tree grows no place else. Its wood is valuable for small souvenir articles, made by



home people in their home shops. Then there's agate-strewn beaches, famous among gem collectors, where you can go pick out a hunk of jewelry for yourself and have it cut and mounted at any one of several shops.

There are two cheese factories, whose products are so fine that they're always short of the demand. Sheep and cattle range from the beach dunes to the Coast Range peaks. And two customs canneries where you can take your fish, wild berries, wild game or garden produce and have it canned overnight to take home. With your own name on the label.

Another important small industry that isn't visible to the hurried traveler is the gathering of wild sword fern and cascara bark back in the forests.

The fern goes to florists all over United States, the medicinal herb to big drug firms. I met up with a man who was earning $10 a day picking ferns—and taking plenty time off for fishing. Not a worry in the world had he.

Outlaws and Lilies

But the thing that has done more'n any other one thing to make bank accounts is the growing of Easter lilies. Outlaws and lilies, ha! Just a few seasons back a man experimented with the bulbs. He found that the Coast soil and climate produced the world's finest. Now nearly everybody has a lily bed.

An odd sight, in this "outlaw" country, to see prim rows of posies against the lavish,

(Continued on page 10)

Would you give less than 7c a day for Music Lessons!

Didn't Dream She Could Learn So Quickly!

"I DIDN'T dream I could actually learn to play without a teacher. . . . I had always heard it couldn't be done. You can imagine my surprise when after 3 or 4 weeks I found I could play real tunes. Now when I play people will hardly believe that I learned to play so well in so short a time. Any person who takes your piano course and studies it cannot help but learn to play." —*H. C. S., California.

FOUND ACCORDION EASY

"I've always wanted to play the piano accordion," writes *H. E. from Canada. "But thought I'd never learn it. Then I read about your lessons. I don't know how to express my satisfaction."

MAKES MONEY

"My little investment paid back a thousand fold. I've been playing for 4 years—and for the last 2 I had to quit my office job. Musicians here make very nice 'dough'."
*J. M., San Juan, P. R.

Music is the magic key to friendship, fun, romance. The person who can play a musical instrument is always sure of a welcome. Why not let music open the door for you to a happier, richer life? Mail the coupon and find out how easily and inexpensively you can learn at home.

*Actual pupils' name on request. Pictures by Professional Models.

Yes, That's all it Costs!

Amazing Print and Picture Method Teaches Thousands to Play in Their Own Homes

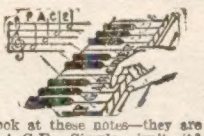
THINK of it! For just about the few pennies you spend for your daily newspapers, YOU CAN LEARN MUSIC! You can learn to play your favorite musical instrument. *Any* instrument—piano, saxophone, violin, guitar, accordion, etc. What's more, you can learn right in your own home, in spare time!

Actually, your music lessons cost less than 7c a day. And that includes *everything*—instruction, sheet music, Personal Advisory Service. No extras of any kind, nothing more to pay.

Easy as A-B-C

No humdrum scales or exercises, either. You start playing real tunes—from the *very first lesson.* YOU LEARN TO PLAY BY PLAYING. Every move is clearly shown in charts and illustrations—with accompanying text to lead you easily from one step to another. And what a thrill to hear yourself actually playing popular songs and classical selections. What a surprise for your friends!

Find out about this easy, money-saving method at once. Join the thousands from all walks of life, from every corner of the globe, who have learned to play this easy A-B-C way, without a teacher. Mail coupon below for illustrated free booklet giving complete information on how you can learn to play any instrument in your own home. Free print and picture sample included. U. S. School of Music, 2943 Brunswick Bldg., New York 10, N. Y. (Forty-eighth year. Established 1898.)



Look at these notes—they are F-A-C-E. Simple, isn't it? You are already learning to read music. It's easy to play, too. A new invention, the "Note-Finder," locates each note for you on the keyboard.

Send for Free Print and Picture Sample

U. S. School of Music, 2943 Brunsw'k Bldg., New York 10, N. Y.
I am interested in music study, particularly in the instrument checked below. Please send me your free illustrated booklet, "How to Learn Music at Home," and Free Print and Picture Sample.

Piano	Piano Accordion	Clarinet	Modern Elementary Harmony
Guitar	Trumpet, Cornet	Trombone	
Hawaiian Guitar	Reed Organ	Flute	
Violin	Tenor Banjo	Piccolo	Practical Finger Control
Saxophone	Ukulele	Mandolin	

Have You Instrument? .....

Name ..... (Please Print)

Address .....

City ..... State .....

Note!—If under 16 years of age, parent must sign coupon

Save 2c—Stick coupon on penny post card.

150 DIAGRAMS and HOW TO READ THEM
150 DIAGRAM BOOK FREE
For Examining My New 7 Volume Set on
ELECTRICITY

HERE'S a valuable book of 150 Electrical and Radio wiring diagrams with charts and instructions. Practical information you need to win security and promotion. It's yours FREE merely for examining my 7-Volume Set on **Applied Practical Electricity** on 7-day's free trial. This 7-Volume Set COVERS EVERYTHING ELECTRICAL from HOUSE WIRING to ADVANCED AC-DC MOTORS and EQUIPMENT. Thousands of diagrams and photos . . . written so both "beginners" and "old-timers" can easily understand.

7-DAY'S FREE TRIAL I want to send you the 7-volume set AT MY RISK, postpaid, for 7-day's FREE examination. I'll also send you the FREE book of 150 Shop Prints which you are to keep as my gift **regardless of whether or not you return the 7-book set.** (No salesman will call.)

Send No Money
Offer Limited—Send Coupon Now!

FREE COUPON | NOT AN ORDER—JUST A REQUEST TO SEE BOOKS

H. C. Lewis, Pres., Coyne Electrical School, Dept. 26-TS
500 S. PAULINA STREET, CHICAGO 12, ILLINOIS

Send me the new 7-volume set "Practical Electricity." Also send the book of 150 Shop Prints which is a FREE gift to me *regardless of whether or not I keep the 7-volume set*. I'll either return the 7-book set in 7 days and keep the 150 Shop Prints book as a gift from you and owe you nothing; or pay $2 within 7 days and $3 a month until $21 is paid, or I'll send the cash price of $19.75. One year FREE Consultation Service and Technical Bulletins included.

NAME _____ Age _____
ADDRESS _____
TOWN _____ Zone _____ STATE _____
☐ Check here if you want to save $1.25 by paying the postman the cash price of $19.75 on delivery. Same 7-day's examination and Money-Back Guarantee.

10K GOLD RINGS
Genuine Diamond

"PERFECT MATCHED WEDDING SET"
These Rings contain **Genuine Diamonds**, mounted in solid 10K yellow **Gold**. We offer a 10-day trial — satisfaction or your **Money Back!** For a limited time only — $5.95 each or the "Bridal Pair" **Only $10.95** plus tax. **Send No Money** — When your Rings arrive, pay postman. **Act Now! Genuine** Diamonds solid **Gold** rings. Gift box free.

VICTORY DIAMOND CO.
Dept. T-346, Wheeling, W. Va.

6 Lovely DRESSES
CLEANED, PRESSED AND READY TO WEAR

Styled Used Wearing-Apparel
ONLY $3.44

SENSATIONAL OFFER —6 gorgeous dresses for only $3.44. Gay, alluring colors. Sizes up to 20, six for $3.44. Larger sizes four for $3.44. Beautiful styles. Save money — be smartly dressed at low cost. Order today. Send only $1.00 deposit, balance C.O.D. plus postage. Satisfaction guaranteed or purchase price refunded.

OUR BONUS GIFT TO YOU
Introductory offer for limited time only — an extra dress free of extra cost with every order of 6 dresses for only $3.44.

SEND PENNY POSTAL TODAY FOR FREE CATALOG FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

ACE MAIL ORDER CO.
414 Madison St., 14-B, New York 2

THE HOME CORRAL

(Continued from page 8)

wildflung background of spruce and fir.

They tell me about a man who borrowed $25 to plant lily bulbs in his yard. That was two years ago. This season he sold $7000 worth of 'em.

This stretch of coast has a climate all its own, on account of a warm ocean current that sweeps close inshore. Lots of fog and rain, but cool summers, mild winters. You can enjoy outdoor life the year through, hunting or fishing any month on the calendar.

And when I say fishing, hombres and hombresses, I tell you that it's the kind you dream about. Records claim that in 1942 sportmen caught 550,000 pounds of salmon and steelhead trout on the Rogue, and 11,000 pounds of other game fish.

Here on this day that I'm telling you about it, I went out before breakfast and caught me on a flyrod four walloping steelhead, total weight 12 pounds. Yessir, a trout weight rod, a 2½-pound test leader and I was hooked onto the biggest one for three-quarters of an hour, wondering when he'd

end the scrap and let me go into camp and get that first cup of coffee.

My tackle held, my arm didn't quite fall off and after awhile that tired 5-pounder floundered into a shallow where I slipped a finger through his gills and had him. Took the before-breakfast catch down to Nick Andraieff's Cannery. Made eight one-pound cans of fish that looks and tastes like the finest sea-fat salmon. They'll go mighty good down on the desert, where I range later on.

To my notion this is better sport than catching the big Chinook down at the mouth on trolling tackle. Except that a 40-pound Chinook fills more cans.

An Important Salmon River

The Rogue is the most important salmon river south of the great Columbia, 400 miles north. In former times the Rogue was also a commercial stream but not anymore. About 50 years ago the commercial canneries came and the gill-netters. But ten-twelve years ago, the State of Oregon closed the Rogue to commercial fishing. It's for sportsmen only now. And the runs are increasing

(Continued on page 91)

Now ANY AUTO REPAIR JOB Can Be "Duck Soup" For You!

MoToR's New AUTO REPAIR MANUAL Shows You How to Service and Repair ANY Part of ANY Car!

FREE 7-DAY OFFER!

NOW you can "polish off" the HARDEST jobs the EASIEST way! MoToR's AUTO REPAIR MANUAL is ready to show you how to repair anything from carburetor to rear end—with the *least* possible amount of time and effort!

Suppose plain-talking car engineers from every auto plant in America got together and showed you all the things you needed to know about repairing and servicing the cars *they* had designed and manufactured! That's really what you get in this big manuall Right at your fingertips, the main "dope" from *150 Official Factory Shop Manuals*, covering every make car built since 1935!

Easy to use, too! Quick-index leads you to right page in jiffy! Just follow simple instructions step-by-step.

SEE HOW MUCH YOU GET!

640 pages, 8½x11 inches. bound in sturdy covers. 200,000 service, repair, adjustment, replacement, tune-up facts on all makes and models, 1936 to 1942. More than 1000 cut-away photos, diagrams, drawings show you exactly WHAT to do and HOW to do it. Used by U. S. Army, trade and technical schools everywhere, thousands of auto servicemen.

Now YOU—without cost—can see for yourself what a wonderbook MoToR's Auto Repair Manual really is. TRY it—FREE for 7 days! Learn first-hand how it can pay for itself the first few times you use it.

SEND NO MONEY

7-Day Free Examination

Just mail coupon at right, without money! When the postman brings your book, pay him nothing. First make it show you what it's got! Unless you agree this is the greatest time-saver and work-saver you've ever seen—return book in 7 days and pay nothing. Mail coupon today! Address: MoToR Book Dept., Desk 64C, 572 Madison Ave., New York 22, N. Y.

Published by MoToR, The Leading Automotive Business Magazine. MoToR's manuals assure high standard repair work.

Same FREE 7-Day Offer Applies on New MoToR's TRUCK REPAIR MANUAL

For mechanics, truck specialists, service stations, fleet owners. Covers EVERY job on EVERY truck made since 1936! 1400 pictures, 900 pages, 300,000 facts. Used by Armed Forces.

All types Gasoline Engines, Diesels, Hesselman, Fuel Systems, Governors, Lubrication Systems, Ignition Systems, Starters, Generators, Clutches, Transmissions, Axles, Torque Dividers, Transfer Cases, Brakes, Steering, etc.

ALSO SERVICES buses, farm and industrial tractors, contractor and road building equipment, stationary power machinery, etc. (on all parts described in Manual.) Check box in coupon at right.

Covers All These Makes!

American Bantam, Auburn, Austin, Buick, Cadillac, Chevrolet, Chrysler, Cord, De Soto, Dodge, Ford, Graham, Hudson, Hupmobile, Lafayette, La Salle, Lincoln, Lincoln Zephyr, Mercury, Nash, Overland, Oldsmobile, Packard, Pierce Arrow, Plymouth, Pontiac, Reo, Studebaker, Terraplane, Willys

USED BY U. S. ARMY

Clear, Pictured Facts on Every Job on Every Car Built Since 1935!

Nearly 200,000 service and repair facts on all 30 makes. 640 big pages; including 50 pages of carburetor text, charts, illustrations, covering all models. Over 450 charts, tables: Tune-up Chart; Valve Measurements; Compression Pressure; Torque Wrench Reading; Starting Motor; Engine Clearances; Generator; Clutch & Brake Specifications; Front End Measurements, etc., Engines; Electric, Fuel, Cooling, Lubricating Systems; Transmissions; Universals; Front Ends; Wheels; Rear Ends, etc.

MAIL COUPON NOW FOR 7-DAY FREE TRIAL

MoToR Book Dept., 64C, 572 Madison Ave., N. Y. 22, N. Y.
Rush to me at once: (check box opposite book you want).

☐ **MoToR's AUTO REPAIR MANUAL** (*formerly "MoToR's Factory Shop Manual"*). If O.K. I will remit $1 in 7 days, $1 monthly for 4 months, plus 35c delivery charge with final payment ($5.35 in all). Otherwise I will return book postpaid in 7 days. **(Foreign price, remit $7 cash with order).**

☐ **MoToR's TRUCK REPAIR MANUAL.** (Described at left in the box.) If O.K., I will remit $2 in 7 days, and $2 monthly for 3 months, plus 35c delivery charges with final payment ($8.35 in all). Otherwise I will return book postpaid in 7 days. **(Foreign, remit $11 with order).**

Name_____ Age_____

Address_____

City_____ Zone No. (if any)_____ State_____

Occupation_____

☐ SAVE 35c! Check here if enclosing full payment (check, money order) WITH coupon. We pay 35c shipping cost.

"THIS WISDOM MUST DIE!"

Truths That Have Been Denied Struggling Humanity

FOR every word that has left the lips of bishops or statesmen to enlighten man, a thousand have been withheld. For every book publicly exposed to the inquiring mind, one hundred more have been suppressed—*damned to oblivion.* Each year of progress has been wilfully delayed centuries. Wisdom has had to filter through biased, secret sessions or ecclesiastical council meetings, where high dignitaries of state and church alone proclaimed what man should know.

Are you prepared to demand the hidden facts of life? Will you continue to believe that you are not capable of weighing the worth of knowledge that concerns your personal freedom and happiness? Realize that much that can make your life more *understandable* and *livable* has been left unexplained or intentionally destroyed. At first by word of mouth only, and *now* by private discourses, are *revealed* those truths which secret brotherhoods preserved in ancient temples and hidden sanctuaries, from those who sought to selfishly deprive humanity of them.

THIS *free* BOOK OF EXPLANATION

Let the Rosicrucians, one of these ancient brotherhoods of learning, tell you about these amazing truths, and explain how you, too, like thousands of others, may now use them to enjoy the fullness of life. The Rosicrucians, (not a religious organization) invite you to use the coupon opposite and receive the FREE copy of the fascinating, Sealed Book, with its startling tale of *self help.*

The ROSICRUCIANS (AMORC)
SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA, U. S. A.

Scribe J.A.X.
THE ROSICRUCIANS (AMORC)
Rosicrucian Park, San Jose, California, U.S.A.

Please send me your FREE Sealed Book. I am sincerely interested in learning how I may receive these long-concealed facts of life.

Name.....

Address.....

As the man pitched on his face, Chino and Jed fired together

LAST OF THE GUN TRIBE

By DEAN OWEN

The lone survivor of a family branded as owlhoots, young Jed Agnew fights against tremendous odds as he strives to clear his name and deliver vengeance to those who framed him!

CHAPTER I

Hangnoose Heritage!

THE sun was warm and it shone down through the poplars, making little pools of light on the graveled walks that crisscrossed the park in front of the Territorial Capitol. The warmth did little to dispel the chill that held Jed Agnew's heart in a grip of ice. He slumped on a bench, his thin legs stretched out, bony hands thrust deep in the pockets of his patched old pants.

He glanced up as he heard boots scrape on the gravel walk. The man who approached the bench wore a baggy suit and there was a bulge of folded paper in his coat pocket. Jed's face set in tight lines as the man halted beside the bench. The kid's voice shook in spite of his effort to control it.

"Did—did it happen?"

Bill Lash, who worked for the "Comet," placed a hand on the boy's shoulder, tipped back his hat.

"They pronounced him dead ten minutes ago. I've got to go and write the story."

Jed Agnew's fingers stiffened into tight fists. His eyes were suddenly mist, his voice

AN EXCITING COMPLETE ACTION NOVEL

a choked sob.

"Yuh reckon it hurt much?"

Lash shook his head slowly. "I don't think so, Jed." An awkward silence, broken only by the birds chattering in the poplars. "They're waiting for you, Jed. You can take him now."

Bill Lash gave the kid a last pat on the shoulder, then strode up the gravel walk and crossed the street to the Comet office.

Jed Agnew got to his feet, and he knew how a man must feel who has been on a drunk for a week. That was the way his brother, Mart, must have felt the day he was supposed to have killed "Rep" Rafferty.

With shuffling steps, Jed moved toward the Agnew wagon at the curb. Nellie, the mule, stood patiently, the yellow wagon shafts fastened to her sweaty gray body.

Jed climbed into the wagon seat and his glance carried across the street to the knot of people who were watching him. There was Miller, the butcher, and Mrs. Grimes, who ran the café, and Pomeroy the saloon man. He saw the cold masks that were their faces.

Mrs. Grimes was talking, and making it loud enough so that Jed could hear.

"I hope it'll be the last we see of the likes of him. Them killer Agnews—killers, that's what they are."

SHE whirled inside her café and slammed the door. Jed felt sick. That bread and cheese he had eaten for lunch was a cold, hard ball in his stomach. He kept his head up and drove Nellie, the mule, down the dusty main street of Baker City.

Two blocks down, Jed saw "Hype" Rafferty and his Halfmoon Bar cowboys just dismounting at the hitch-rail in front of the Baker Bar. There were perhaps eight of them. Hype Rafferty turned and stared as Jed Agnew drove by.

He was a big, wide man, this Hype Rafferty. He was ageless, a man who could have been thirty-five or fifty. He smoked a big cigar as he watched Jed out of narrow, shrewd eyes.

A drummer, with a derby hat and a sample case under his arm, stopped beside Hype Rafferty. He pointed at Jed on the wagon seat.

"What's everybody starin' at the kid for?"

Hype Rafferty's eyes went a bit colder. He didn't remove the cigar from his mouth as he spoke.

"There goes the brother of the man who murdered my son." Rafferty stared hard at Jed Agnew, then turned to his men. "Let's go, boys. The liquor's on me."

Jed looked back and watched the cowpunchers troop inside the Baker Bar, heard the jingle of their spur chains and their loud talk. There was an ache in his heart when he turned down the road that led toward the Territorial Prison.

It was cool on the tree-lined road and Nellie, the mule, plodded along, dust kicking up from her heels. Five minutes later, Jed pulled up before a big iron-barred gate. A man inside, with a club and a six-shooter belted around his waist, opened the gate.

Jed drove the wagon inside. Guards stood around and Jed could see a half dozen trusties coming with a long, rough box. The kid averted his eyes and clenched his teeth. One of the guards laughed.

"Take a good look, kid. We'll have you in here one of these days."

"There won't be nobody callin' for him, though," another guard said with a chuckle.

He spat tobacco juice on the wagon bed. The guards laughed. The tail gate of the wagon was unchained and the coffin slid across the boards. Springs groaned with the added weight.

When the coffin was loaded, the warden came out of his office, a spindly-legged little man with dirty spectacles. He came to the wagon, handed up a bandanna tied at the corners.

"His stuff," the warden said gruffly. "Wanted you to have it."

A black cloud of dread threw its shadow across Jed's mind as he took the bandanna. He didn't know why he should feel badly. His legs still bore the marks of the last beating his brother, Mart, had given him in one of his drunken rages. Yet the thought of his brother's body in that long, pine box in the wagon bed made sweat spill across the forehead and set his heart to beating faster.

Jed flipped the reins along Nellie's gray back. The gate was opened and the wagon started to leave the prison. One of the guards spoke up.

"I feel sorry for that kid."

The warden snorted.

"Yuh're new here or yuh wouldn't talk that way. He's the last of the Agnews. His old man was shot in Virginia City and now his brother has been hanged for murder."

The warden and the guards watched the wagon disappearing up the tree-lined road. The warden grinned a toothless, warping smile and turned to the guards.

"All right, boys, back to work. Just because we hang a man, ain't no cause for a holiday."

Jed Agnew drove the wagon down the road, his dark thoughts reflected on his face. He skirted the town and headed toward the hills. Beyond he could see the sudden roll of high mountains, black with pines and white in spots where winter snow clung stubbornly to shadowy places. It was hot now that the trees had been left behind and the dust kicked up by Nellie's heels bit into Jed's nostrils.

THE road forked a hundred yards ahead, one leading on up to the hills and the other winding around a knoll. Up there, Jed could see the iron grille fence and the crosses. When he came to the fork, he headed that way.

A man with a star on his vest got up from a rock at sight of Jed. Gray-haired Sheriff Roy Knight. He was smoking an old pipe and his blue eyes narrowed at sight of the kid.

Jed pulled up, his face set in grim lines. Old Nellie twitched her ears at sight of Knight's horse, tied off in the brush.

Knight came right to the point.

"Yuh got a grave dug for yore brother here in the graveyard, but yuh can't use it. The Citizen's Committee has decided yuh can't bury Mart here, kid. Sorry, but that's the way she is." He pulled a legal-looking paper out of his pocket, slapped it on his hand. "Want to see it?"

Jed shook his head. There was a bitter note in his voice.

"Some day they'll be plumb sorry for this."

Knight chewed on his pipe stem.

"Talk like that will put you where yore brother is. Yuh're only eighteen, Jed. Yuh got time to make a fresh start. Leave the country and forget all this."

The lawman helped maneuver Nellie and the wagon around in the narrow road. Nellie showed her yellow teeth and tried to nip the lawman's arm. He pulled aside with an oath.

His face grim, Jed drove the wagon back to the fork in the road and on toward the hills. He looked back once and saw Roy Knight standing there in the bright sunlight watching him.

It took Jed half an hour to drive to the Agnew place at the foot of the mountains. As he rounded a bend in the road, he saw the two saddled horses tied in front of the clapboard house. Nellie quickened her pace with an eye on the shade trees that grew beside the corral.

Jed recognized those mounts and some of the chill left his heart. Wind from the mountains made rattling sounds in the poplars as Jed pulled the wagon into the shade.

A girl got up from a bench and came toward him. She was long-legged and her red hair hung in two braids down the back of her expensive doeskin shirt. Her riding trousers were of good cloth and her boots hand-tooled. Jed got down from the wagon seat and the girl laid a freckled hand on his arm. Her eyes, a mixture of green and blue, were fixed on his white, grim face. They were strange eyes, warm, yet cold.

"I'm sorry, Jed. I don't know what to say."

Jed tried to smile as he looked down at the girl.

"I guess there ain't much to say." The smile faded. "Yuh shouldn't have come, Terry. Yore dad wouldn't like it."

Terry Rafferty's red lips firmed.

"I don't care what he likes." She tossed her red head so that the braids danced.

Bill Lash, the man from the Comet, got off the bench and came forward. He had left his hat on the bench and sunlight showed the streaks of gray in his curly hair. His clothes were wrinkled and there was that familiar bulge of paper in his pocket.

"We saw Roy Knight and knew you'd come here." He paused awkwardly. "You tell me the spot, Jed. I'll dig the grave. You go talk with Terry."

Jed's eyes showed their gratitude. He took a deep breath.

"I'll help. Pa used to say that a man had to work to keep from thinkin' things."

CHAPTER II

The Fight!

AT MENTION of his father, Jed's thoughts went back through the years to that black night when they had brought Old Man Agnew's body home. Jed had been seven then. He wondered vaguely if his brother, Mart, and his father now were riding together some place up there in the blue sky above.

Jed got two shovels from the barn. He and Bill Lash dug the grave on a knoll out back of the house, and when it was finished, they drove the wagon up to the open hole. They got ropes and lowered the heavy cof-

fin into the ground.

Jed found his voice.

"Say somethin', will yuh, Mr. Lash?"

Wind ruffled Bill Lash's graying hair and his eyes looked across the rolling hills to the desert, and beyond to the haze of mountains that bordered the opposite side of the valley. He spoke in a low, soft voice.

"Death is but the opening of a door to a shadowed room, and to a new life that finds the sun with the passing of the days. Mart Agnew rides a new trail—a happy trail."

Then Bill Lash recited the Lord's prayer and Jed Agnew and Terry mumbled the words with him. When the grave was filled, Jed got timbers and fashioned a rude cross and put it over the mound of earth.

Bill Lash got his horse and stepped into saddle. He looked down at Jed.

"I'm running an editorial in today's Comet," he said. "You had nothing to do with your brother's misdeeds, and I'm going to see if I can't make people understand."

Jed tried to tell him that it was no use, but Bill Lash spurred down the road toward Baker City. Then Terry Rafferty stepped to Jed's side.

"If you cared anything about me, you'd run off with me. I'm most sixteen. We could get married. I don't like it here."

Jed Agnew looked down at the girl, saw her pouting lips and the shrewd light in her greenish eyes. But he missed these things and he longed to take her in his arms. He put his hands on her shoulders.

Then the spell was broken as a thread snaps under too much tension. He pushed the girl away and looked into the distance, his mouth a bitter slant across his face.

"Yuh can't think of marryin' me, Terry—now or never. The Rafferty's and the Agnews been fightin' since yore dad and mine fought over the same claim in Virginia City."

The girl stepped back.

"Dad won't let me do the things I want. I can't go to the dance at the schoolhouse. I can't do this and I can't do that."

Jed's face clouded.

The woman's voice was cold and threatening. "Take your hands off that boy or I'll kill you!"

"My brother was supposed to have murdered yore brother. They're both dead. Yet you can talk about school dances."

The girl smiled and tugged at Jed's shirt sleeve.

"I only want you, Jed."

Jed's voice hardened with sudden resolution.

"I'm goin' away. But I'll come back. Then it'll be different."

"I'll wait for you, Jed," she said eagerly. "I'll always wait for you."

Youth's promise made without regard for the coming years. She was gone then, spurring her horse across the ranchyard and down the trail that led to the big Halfmoon Bar spread.

Jed watched her, then turned inside the house. Memories crowded around him. The place smelled of stale whisky and Jed recalled the nights that his brother, Mart, and "Chino" Mellus and his boys had stopped by here. And he remembered the whispered words and the night rides when Halfmoon Bar cattle or horses were rustled and driven across the mountains to a cattle buyer who hung out near Visalia.

Jed recalled the night when a man had died in the house. Dark-eyed Chino and Mart had taken him into the hills and buried him.

The fight between the Agnews and the Raffertys had started in Virginia City. Rafferty had come out the winner and, with his money, had started the Halfmoon Bar. Old Man Agnew had taken his defeat to heart and had organized night riders to prey upon the Rafferty holdings. For Old Man Agnew claimed that he had discovered the rich Silver Lady Mine, and that Rafferty had cheated him out of it.

On one of those night rides, Old Man Agnew hadn't come back. He had run into Rafferty men and been killed.

JED remembered all those things as he took down a rifle from a rack on the wall. He gathered up his few belongings and went back to the wagon. He drove Nellie down the road toward town. He had no money and no home, for Tod Crenshaw, the banker in Baker City, had foreclosed on the Agnew place.

With a final glance at the grave on the hill, Jed turned his eyes front. As he rode he thought of the night Rep Rafferty, Terry's

brother, had been killed. Mart Agnew had been drunk for a week and had only sobered up long enough to hear himself found guilty and sentenced to hang.

A few miles down the road, Jed remembered the bandanna the warden had given him. He untied it. There was an assortment of junk. A faded daguerrotype of Mart and Old Man Agnew taken at Dodge City before Jed was born. There was a knife, a battered six-shooter and a deck of cards.

Jed put the gun in his belt and the other stuff in his pockets.

He went straight to Baker City and turned in at the livery. Old Si Jenks, the owner, turned his back deliberately when he saw Jed drive in. Jed felt the blood rush to his face, but he curbed the sudden force of anger which threatened to engulf him.

"I'm leavin' town," he called. "Thought mebbe yuh'll give me a price for the mule and wagon."

Jenks spat tobacco juice on the straw-littered floor.

"Give yuh twelve dollars. Take it or leave it."

With the gold coins in his hand, Jed stepped to old Nellie's side. He rubbed her neck affectionately and she stomped the dusty floor and showed her teeth playfully.

Jed went outside then, walked toward the bank, carrying his rifle. People avoided him. There was no friendly greeting, no word of sympathy. The remembered friendship of Terry Rafferty and Bill Lash was all that kept him going.

He passed the Baker Bar and noted that Hype Rafferty and his men were sitting on the long, wooden bench in front of the place, as if waiting for him.

Rafferty spoke up.

"Where yuh goin', Agnew?"

Jed's face tightened and he started to pass, but Rafferty's voice caught him up.

"Yuh're thinkin' Tod Crenshaw will give yuh a few dollars to see yuh out of the country?"

Jed faced the Halfmoon Bar owner.

"That's the least he can do. He took the ranch without givin' me a chance."

The men on the bench laughed. Then that laughter faded as a man stepped out of the batwings. He was a head taller than Jed, lean, hard and handsome. His name was Tom Natchy. Some folks said he was part Cherokee. His little bloodshot eyes bored into Jed's face.

"I been ridin' for Hype Rafferty for a long spell," he remarked. "Ain't never got myself a Agnew. But I'm gettin' one now."

Natchy rushed in, big fists swinging. Jed's six-gun and rifle went flying. The kid fought back grimly, but it was two hundred pounds of solid bone and muscle against his own hundred and twenty pounds. Natchy's right flattened Jed's lips against his teeth. Pain made a spear of white light before his eyes. He crashed back against the hitch-rail. Ponies tied there started to kick up their heels.

Natchy's big hand closed on Jed's shirt front, pulled him up close. There was a crooked grin on the dark man's lips. Deliberately he took his elbow and smashed it across Jed's nose.

Jed went backward, fell into the street. When he raised himself up on his hands, he saw the little brown puddles of blood in the dust.

Only seconds he lay there. He swung his gaze to Hype Rafferty and the other cowhands. Amusement was stamped on their faces. Suddenly Jed knew this was all part of a plan. They were going to let Natchy beat him to a pulp.

Sudden anger drove new strength into the kid's body. Natchy was coming toward him again. He was grinning, his big chest exposed where Jed had torn his shirt. Jed reached up, grabbed Natchy by the wrist and pulled him to the ground.

Natchy went on his face. Before he could get up, Jed was on him. There was no science, no ethics. It was blood and dust and bone. Jed smashed into Natchy's face and the man laughed.

NATCHY rolled over, pulled Jed to his feet. He held him up close and Jed could smell the whisky on the man's breath. It made him think of the times his brother, Mart, had beaten him when he was on a drunk. Natchy's voice cut through the awful stillness that had settled over Baker City.

"Yore brother killed Rep Rafferty, kid. And I'm thinkin' you was in on the deal."

He smashed the kid back against the saloon front. Jed stood there on wobbly legs, blood running down over his face. His eyes swung to the crowd that had gathered and he saw by the cold masks on their faces that they were waiting for Natchy to finish him and that not one of them would lift a hand to help.

There was Chino Mellus, the man who had drunk Mart Agnew's liquor and eaten his food. Mellus was a short man with a wiry black mustache. He stood beside handsome Tod Crenshaw, the banker.

Mellus and Crenshaw exchanged glances

and the barest flicker of a smile showed on the banker's lips. In the months to come, Jed was to remember the look that had passed between the banker and the owlhooter, Chino Mellus.

The stage from Reno clattered into town, laying a fine spray of dust over the men who ringed Jed Agnew and the breed, Natchy. Soon the stage would head south for Bridgeport and the gold diggings beyond.

Natchy held Jed up against the front of the Baker Bar.

"Say yuh helped kill Rep Rafferty and I'll lay off."

His fist lashed out and Jed's head cracked against the building front. Natchy's big hand grabbed the kid by the belt, held him up, when he threatened to slide to the boardwalk.

"Talk, cuss yuh!" he yelled. "I was there when they got yore old man! By glory, I'll see you get the same!"

A sudden overpowering hate built up in Jed Agnew. He had been kicked and belted by his father and beaten by his brother, Mart. Now Natchy was taking his turn, and it was too much.

Jed bent double, rammed his head in Natchy's paunch. The breed grunted, went flat on his back, his face suddenly losing some of its color.

Chino Mellus was fingering his black mustache and laughing.

"Come on, Natchy," he urged. "Finish the kid. He helped kill Rep Rafferty all right."

Jed turned on Mellus, cursed him through bloody, torn lips. He looked at Hype Rafferty. The rancher still smoked his big cigar, his eyes cold. Then Natchy got to his feet. He went to the hitch-rail, leaned over and retched in the street. There was murder in his eyes when he turned back.

Natchy wiped his lips with his shirt sleeve, came toward the kid, fast. Jed met Natchy's savage rush with flying fists. But he might as well have been trying to hammer the front of the saloon wall.

Natchy swung rights and lefts and when Jed put his hands up to his face, the breed smashed him in the pit of the stomach. Jed started to fall and Natchy held him up.

Then a voice cut through the afternoon stillness of Baker City. It was a woman's voice, cold and threatening.

"You dirty dog! Take your hands off that boy or I'll kill you!

All eyes turned to the woman. She was beautiful, her skin fair, her eyes gray as a winter's sky. Her long ruffled dress touched the dust of the street. Wind caught the long plume in her hat. She held a parasol in one hand, a double-barreled pistol in the other.

CHAPTER III

Beartrap

NATCHY had whirled at the sound of the woman's voice and he stood there glaring at her, his black eyes savage. She had pushed through the crowd and now men stood awkward, shuffling their feet and exchanging nervous glances. Seconds passed. One by one they began to drift up the street, a sense of shame reflected on their faces.

Chino Mellus smoothed his black mustache, looked at the woman.

"Goldie Haines from Virginia City," he said. "You're dealin' a bad hand here. Better step out."

Goldie Haines didn't answer. Contempt showed on her face, was mirrored in her gray eyes. Through all this, Jed had kept his aching body braced against the saloon wall, seeing the play through eyes that would not quite focus.

Without a word, Goldie Haines stepped to Jed's side, helped him across the street. The stage driver had the door of the coach open. He shoved the kid inside. Jed fell on his face, out cold.

Blood from his face was on Goldie's lace dress, but she took no notice. She climbed in after Jed, slammed the door. The driver cracked his whip and the heavy Concord rattled off down the road that led toward the blue mountains and Bridgeport.

Natchy went inside the Baker Bar for a drink. Hype Rafferty got to his feet, threw his cigar into the dust. He stared after the stage.

"That's the last we'll see of Jed Agnew."

Tod Crenshaw, the banker, stood by his side, a light of amusement showing in his eyes.

"Good thing he left," he remarked. "We'd have only had to hang him."

But Chino Mellus voiced a doubt.

"I know them Agnews. I think the kid will be back some day."

Then a red-haired girl spurred up the street on a buckskin pony. She pulled up in front of the Baker Bar and slid from the saddle. Terry Rafferty's blue-green eyes sparked with anger as she faced her father.

"What did you do to Jed?" she demanded. "I passed the stage. I saw him. His face was all—all beaten!"

Hype Rafferty looked down at his daughter and his words were cold, icy.

"You forget about that kid, Terry. I know yuh been sneakin' away to meet him. That's one reason I run him out of town. Raffertys and Agnews don't mix." Terry seemed about to explode and Hype Rafferty laid a compelling hand on her shoulder. "Tod Crenshaw asked me if he could take yuh to the dance Saturday."

For a moment Terry's face lost a little of its hardness, then she whirled, climbed into the saddle and spurred out of town.

Tod Crenshaw's handsome face was troubled.

"She doesn't seem to like me."

"She'll do what I say, Crenshaw. It was just a silly infatuation she had for that boy. I'd be proud to have a banker in the family, after our talk this mornin'."

Tod Crenshaw's eyes lighted, but before he had a chance to say anything Bill Lash came up. He was hatless, coatless and sweat showed in patches on his white shirt. He carried a copy of the Comet in his hand. The ink was not dry and it smeared when he shoved it at Hype Rafferty.

"I just heard what you did to Jed. Well, perhaps my editorial today will make people realize, too late, just what they've done. Persecution has no place in this world, Rafferty, and I'm going to see what I can do in ending it. In Baker City at least.

For a long minute, Hype Rafferty said nothing. He didn't take the paper that Lash shoved at him. When he spoke his voice was soft.

"What yuh just said means yuh're through in Baker City. Yuh know that, don't yuh, Lash?"

The newspaper man laughed.

"It'll take more than you to scare me out, Rafferty." He turned on his heel and strode back toward the Comet office.

Tod Crenshaw pursed his lips.

"It begins to look as if Bill Lash will be a rather bad influence here in Baker City. Our political setup might suffer if he is to continue."

Hype Rafferty said nothing, but Chino Mellus winked at Tod Crenshaw and the matter seemed to be settled. The future of Bill Lash in Baker City had been fixed.

FOUR days passed before Jed Agnew came to enough to take an interest in his surroundings. The room spun like a pinwheel when he climbed out of bed and staggered to the window.

He saw the sweep of mountains and the sun touching the last snows that clung to rocky peaks.

His eyes hurt and he had to squint in order to get a clear picture of anything. He went to the washstand. There was a cracked mirror on the wall. He looked at his reflection and his stomach went cold. His face was purple and there were great lumps of flesh around his eyes. After washing his face, he felt better.

Then the door opened and Goldie Haines came in. Her beauty was something that made Jed's throat go tight and sent the blood pounding through his body. She smiled at him and he noted that her teeth were a dazzling white.

"I heard you moving around," she said, "so I came in. I'm glad you came out of it."

She moved closer to him and Jed smelled the perfume of her and when she laid a hand on his arm he saw the flash of a ring on her finger. Jed's voice was cracked, shaky.

"Thanks for what yuh done. I remember that much.

Goldie Haines smiled and moved to the window. Sunlight made a honey-colored pile out of her hair. When she walked there was a rustle of satin.

"The stage is coming," she said. "Do you think you can make it?"

She looked back at him and Jed felt a flush steal over his face. Something about her brought sweat to his forehead. He remembered the tales of Goldie Haines in Virginia City. She had run the only square gambling house in that money-mad town, and so far as anyone knew, she had loved no man. She was a mystery and Jed wondered why she had picked on him to save from the fists of Tom Natchy. Pity, of course, he told himself.

Goldie Haines left and Jed followed. He was stiff and sore, and every movement brought a twist of pain to his lips. He found he was in the Patterson House, a way station in the mountains, fifteen miles out of Bridgeport.

A half-dozen men lounged around the big front room of the way station. Goldie was talking to the stage driver, while Jed drank a cup of coffee at the long table. The men in the room eyed Goldie, but she ignored them.

When Goldie turned to Jed, her face was solemn. She called him to the front porch. The men in the room paid no attention to Jed's battered face. This was tough country

and a man with two black eyes was nothing novel.

Outside, Goldie faced Jed.

"The only way to take bad news, is to take it, kid. The stage driver tells me a friend of yours has been killed. Bill Lash!"

Jed went hollow inside. He staggered as if he had taken another of Tom Natchy's savage blows. His eyes became misty, but his jaw muscles tightened. He had experienced a detached sorrow when his father and brother had wound up in their graves, but Bill Lash—that was something else. He thought of the books that Bill had loaned him, of Bill's friendly words. He thought of the man who had helped him dig his brother's grave. Jed shook himself and his voice was cold.

"I'm going back to Baker City. Lash was my only friend—that is, almost."

He thought of Terry Rafferty and he wished he had run off with her like she had wanted him to.

But no, that wasn't right. When he married Terry he had to be somebody, have something to offer.

Goldie Haines was talking and her voice was firm but filled with understanding.

"Don't go back to Baker City," she was saying. "Not yet. Prepare yourself first. There is plenty of time. If you return now they'll only kill you."

And so Jed Agnew was convinced of Goldie's wisdom. He boarded the stage with her and started on the long trip through the mountains to the new diggings at Beartrap.

As they rode, he learned how a dark man with a black mustache had shot down Bill Lash on the main street of Baker City. Lash had had a gun in his hand, but he was no fighter. It was murder. And in Jed's mind was fixed the picture of a man to be remembered as long as he lived—Chino Mellus, for the murder of Bill Lash could be no one else.

IT TOOK them five days to come within sight of Beartrap and in those days Jed Agnew became a man. He looked at life through eyes that were shrewd and no longer held the vague youthful impressions of a tinsel world.

Just before they reached Beartrap a new passenger got on. He had no sooner settled in his seat than he smiled knowingly at Jed, then at Goldie.

"Takin' 'em a little young, ain't yuh, Goldie?"

Goldie slapped the man's face so hard that his hat came off and blew out the window. He cowered back in his seat and didn't say another word.

All during the trip Jed had thought of Chino Mellus, Tod Crenshaw and Tom Natchy. Yes, and there was Hype Rafferty, Terry's father. Now that Jed was away from Baker City he could see the picture plain.

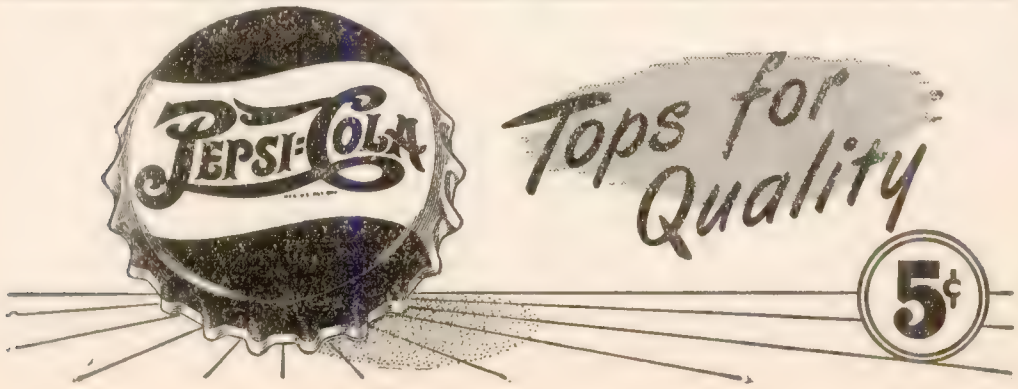
Crenshaw and Rafferty were out to gobble up the range surrounding the town. But there was a doublecross some place, for Jed had a feeling that Tod Crenshaw knew more about the killing of Rafferty's son, Rep, than he was letting on.

Beartrap was wide open. It was a lustful, gold-mad camp, set high in the Sierras, perched on the shore of Silver Lake. There were log shacks back in the trees, but the main street of Beartrap was a jumble of false-fronted buildings.

Heavy ore wagons moved through the mud. Pack mules stood lined at hitch-rails. The stage driver headed his heavy coach through the traffic to the Nugget Bar, a large, two-story place. When men saw Goldie Haines, they let out a yell. They fought for the honor of carrying her cowhide trunk and fancy grips. Goldie smiled at them.

Jed followed her inside the Nugget. There were gambling tables. A tall, thin-faced man stepped forward. His cheeks were the color

[*Turn page*]



of chalk dust and he coughed before he spoke. Goldie introduced him to Jed.

The man let a brief smile touch his lips and nodded at Jed. His name was "Reno" and he wore the black frock of a gambler. He turned to the men in the Nugget.

"Here she is, boys! The queen of Beartrap. Goldie Haines."

Goldie waved her hand.

"Boys, I bought the Nugget sight unseen from John Brant. I'm the new boss. The games are level and the whisky straight. But no rough stuff."

A cheer went up from the men and Jed Agnew realized that a new chapter in life was beginning for him. He took a hitch in his belt, stepped to Goldie's side.

"I want to work. What can I do?"

For a long minute she stared at him, unmindful of the jostling miners who crowded around. Then she beckoned him to a corner. Jed saw something in her eyes that he had not seen there before. Her voice was low, soft, but carried above the bedlam of noise in the Nugget Bar.

"I want to help you, Jed. You may not understand why. Perhaps I don't myself. But you see, I knew a fellow once, just like you. He was pushed around here in the West and before he was old enough to learn how to take care of himself, he was killed. If you can go back to Baker City and even your own score, maybe you'll help even mine at the same time."

Jed stood awkwardly in the corner of the big room, his eyes on Goldie's face. He noted that she wasn't quite as young as she first had seemed. There were tired lines around her eyes and around her mouth.

"Who was the feller yuh knew who was like me?" Jed asked.

"He was my husband."

For a moment her gray eyes looked beyond the Nugget Bar and far into the past. Then she caught herself and smiled. She called to Reno and the tall man came over. "I want you to teach Jed all you know," she said.

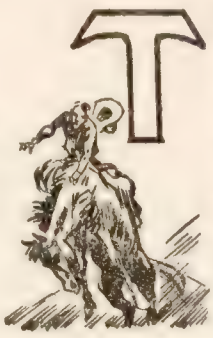
Reno coughed and nodded. He showed no emotion, taking the word of Goldie Haines as law.

And it was Reno who taught Jed Agnew the ways of life. How to handle cards. There were long nights when Jed sat under a blazing overhead kerosene lamp and matched wits with miners and gamblers. Then there were long days when Jed practised with a gun. Reno believed in a shoulder holster. And Jed learned how to get a gun from beneath his coat in split seconds.

He had been in Beartrap for three years.

CHAPTER IV

Gun Smoke Debt



THE weeks faded into months and the winter drove the miners to the valley and there they loafed and drank and played cards. There were shootings and knifings. Then with the coming of spring, Jed took a trip to Los Angeles with Goldie, Reno and the colored maid, Liz. Jed sensed that it was some special occasion, but all Goldie would say was:

"You'll find out soon enough, Jed."

In Los Angeles he bought himself a suit and some fancy boots. He went to a Mexican baile, a dance held on the top floor of a ramshackle building just north of Olvera Street. Here he found that the girls cast sly glances in his direction. For the first time in his life he had confidence.

But when he danced with the dark-eyed senoritas he thought of Terry Rafferty with her blue-green eyes and her moist, red lips. Then his heart would freeze and an ache come to his throat.

In Los Angeles he got into a fight at the Los Dos Amigos Cantina, the Cafe of the Two Friends. Two renegades didn't like the cut of his fancy duds and they pulled knives and attempted to whittle the clothes from his body.

Three years had gone by since Jed had left Baker City. He was tall, wide-shouldered, tanned. He backed against the wall as Reno had taught him to do. And when the men came toward him, he felt the cold sweat break out on his forehead. For an instant his knees shook. It seemed that both those men were Tom Natchy, coming in for the kill.

Then he shook his head to clear it. Saw the gleam of lamplight on naked blades. He heard the high-pitched scream of a girl. Tables overturned as men fought to get out of the way.

Jed's hand whipped under his coat and a long-barreled gun was suddenly visible. He stepped sideward suddenly, gracefully as the two men rushed. Twice he chopped down with that gun barrel and both men dropped to the floor.

He stood there for a moment looking at their huddled bodies and hearing their groans. Then his eyes swept the cantina and what he saw pleased him. These men here were afraid of him. Afraid to take up the fight.

Deliberately he holstered the gun, then with a salute to the dark-eyed girl who had caused all the trouble, he stepped out into the night air.

The fog was heavy and it felt good. It cooled his face. He crossed the plaza and saw the shadow of the old church across the dusty street. At the Pico House, the town's best hotel, he found Goldie. She had just driven up in a black-wheeled buggy. There was a someone beside her—a girl.

Goldie beckoned to Jed and he went over and helped her alight from the carriage. There was a puzzled frown on his forehead as he saw Goldie's shining eyes; a look that he hadn't seen there before. Then Jed felt a warm hand in his and he was meeting the girl.

"This is my daughter, Jed—Paula."

Jed Agnew was startled, but he gave no outward sign. This was the first he had heard of Goldie's daughter. He found himself looking into warm brown eyes and saw smiling lips. He wanted to look deeper into those eyes, but the image of Terry Rafferty came like a shadow between them and his heart went cold.

He held his hat in his hand. His voice was steady, impersonal.

"I didn't know Goldie had a daughter. I'm glad to meet you, ma'am."

Goldie Haines showed that she noted the change that had come over Jed, and her face clouded. But that ready smile returned to her lips, and she led them into the lobby of the Pico House.

Jed watched Paula out of the corner of his eye. She was vibrant and there was an excited flush on her cheeks. The black lace dress she wore could not hide the curves of her rounded young body. There was a perky little hat set jauntily on top of brown curls.

"This is my first trip to the Coast," she said, turning to Jed. And again he felt as if some hidden power in those brown eyes reached out to him, tried to melt the ice that packed his heart.

Jed nodded. "I hope yuh like it here."

HE LISTENED while Goldie told how Paula had been living with an aunt in St. Louis since the death of her father. Goldie was watching Paula and Jed as she talked and there was a quiet insistence in her voice.

"I wanted my daughter near me, Jed. I'm selling out at Beartrap and with the money we can buy a ranch some place and really live. We can forget the old hates and the plans for revenge." Her voice ended on a hopeful note.

Jed knew she was referring to Baker City and the job she had trained him to do. Now she wanted him to forget Chino Mellus and Tod Crenshaw and Tom Natchy. Wanted him to forget that Bill Lash had been shot down without a chance.

"There are some things a man has to do," Jed said to her.

Paula didn't follow the conversation and there was a questioning look in her eyes. Goldie smiled.

"I want my daughter to have a chance," she said. "She's nineteen and I feel she should see life. Stand on the edge and see the things that make people cry and make people gay."

Goldie Haines touched her lips with her handkerchief and her voice became husky. "Besides, Paula will be wanting to marry one of these days."

Paula laughed, a gay, musical laugh.

"Mother! Jed will think you're trying to marry me off."

Jed's face turned red and he pulled a big silver watch out of his pocket. He glanced at the face, snapped the cover shut and put it back in his pocket.

"I've got to find Reno," he said, trying to cover up his embarrassment. He got up, bowed stiffly and left the lobby.

Paula turned to her mother. "I don't think he likes me very well." She straightened in her chair and her eyes followed Jed's tall figure out the doorway. "But I like him. I really do."

Goldie Haines patted her hand, but there was a troubled look on her face.

Outside, Jed walked the streets, with his hands shoved deep in his pockets. For the first time since he had left Baker City, it seemed that he was swerved from his course. It couldn't be Paula, he reasoned. He had just met her. Yet something about the girl disturbed him and he found it harder to remember Terry Rafferty.

He turned in at Clayton's Bar. The place was crowded and there was the tinny sound of a piano and the squeak of a fiddle. A group of half-drunk cowhands were singing in the back. A girl slipped her arm through Jed's, but he shook his head and stepped to the bar.

He ordered a drink and tossed it down.

The air was heavy with smoke and sweat. Jed could look over the heads of most of the men. That was when he spotted Chino Mellus. Chino had not changed much with the passing years. He was still dark and that bristly mustache was like a blot of grease on his upper lip. He was sitting at a table with a girl in a spangled dress.

Jed Agnew's mind whirled back through the years and once again he could see his brother, Mart, and Chino at the kitchen table in the Agnew ranchhouse, drinking whisky and planning new devilment. And suddenly he remembered something that had seemed unimportant at the time. He remembered Tom Natchy was coming in with smashing fists—and that look that had passed between Chino Mellus and Tod Crenshaw, the banker.

Something stirred in Jed's mind. He also remembered that Rep Rafferty, old Hype's son, had been carrying eight thousand dollars on him at the time he had been killed. When he body was found there had been no money on it.

Hate filled Jed Agnew and blotted Terry Rafferty and Paula and Goldie from his mind. Seeing Chino Mellus again brought back the bitter days that had been his lot in Baker City. Then, a kind word or a friendly pat on the back would have meant a lot to a bewildered kid.

And suddenly he was glad. For now he knew that nothing could keep him from returning to Baker City and evening that old score. He owed Goldie Haines a lot, but his debt to Bill Lash came first.

JED AGNEW pushed his way through the crowd until he reached Chino Mellus. He placed big hands, palms down on the table.

Chino looked up, irritation stamped on his dark face.

"Get out of—"

His voice trailed off to a whisper. His black eyes widened and gray tinged his cheeks. The girl in the spangled dress took one look at Jed and left the table, her face white. For a long minute, Chino and Jed locked eyes.

Chino Mellus settled back in his chair and his hands dropped from sight below the table top. His greasy black hair glistened in the lamp light. A tiny head of sweat rolled down his forehead and dropped off the end of his nose.

The customers in Clayton's bar sensed that something was wrong. The piano and fiddle went dead. Talk was hushed, then died altogether.

When Jed's voice whipped out it seemed that he and Chino were alone.

"Hello, Chino. Remember me?"

Chino Mellus worked his mouth and his eyes darted around the room as if seeking help from some friend. He evidently saw no one who would side him. He made a sudden grab for his gun. Jed's left hand caught his wrist. He twisted up and Chino howled with pain. The gun clattered to the floor.

Jed pulled the man up out of the chair and read the stark terror that was in Chino's eyes.

"Yuh're gun crazy!" Chino babbled. "Just like Mart and yore old man. Yuh got the Agnew gun fever!"

Sweat was blotching his dark cheeks. A muscle twitched in his neck. Jed held him tighter and Chino's face whitened with pain.

"Yuh're settlin' two scores tonight, Chino. My brother, Mart, and—Bill Lash."

Chino was licking his lips and his eyes bulged like black marbles.

The barkeep suddenly cleared a lane to the table. He had a double-barreled shotgun in his hands.

"Take him outside!" he yelled at Jed. "We don't want trouble in here."

The piano and fiddle started their discordant harmony once again. But every eye in the place was on Jed Agnew as he dragged Chino Mellus out the door and into the street. He pulled him to an alley. Passersby looked at them curiously, but no one tried to interfere, for this was Los Angeles, where life was cheap and Death only a whisper that rode the foggy clouds in from the sea.

Jed pulled the struggling Chino deeper into the alley, slammed him against the wall.

"We'll start with Rep Rafferty, Chino. Who killed him? Mart didn't do it. He was too drunk. I can see that now."

Jed twisted Chino's wrist and the man yelled with pain.

"All right, I'll tell!"

It was a trick, for when Jed relaxed his grip, Chino tried to run. Jed brought him up by twisting Chino's wrist until tears ran down the man's cheeks. Lamplight that filtered in from the alley mouth showed the fear that was stamped on Chino's face.

"Well?" demanded Jed. "Who killed Rep Rafferty?"

"Tod Crenshaw. He made me and Tom Natchy do it."

"Go on." Jed's voice was bitter, cold. He twisted Chino's wrist and words tumbled from the man's lips.

"Rep and yore brother, Mart—we was all in on the deal. Rep was goin' to pretend he

was held up. We was goin' to split the money. Crenshaw made me and Natchy a side deal. He wanted Rep out of the way because with him dead he'd have a better chance of gittin' the Halfmoon Bar. Crenshaw made me and Tom kill Rep. Mart was drunk. Crenshaw made out like it was Mart done the job."

Chino was babbling with pain and trying to pull loose. Jed had figured that the killing of Rep Rafferty had added up to something like that.

Then his lips thinned.

"You killed Bill Lash, didn't yuh, Chino? Crenshaw wanted him out of the way because he printed an editorial in the Comet about me. I heard all about it."

Chino licked his lips. "It was a fair fight," Chino said. "He had a gun."

Then a voice called from the alley mouth: "That you, Chino?"

FOR a breath, Jed looked away. Chino yelled, pulled loose. He darted into the shadows. The man at the alley mouth who had spoken Chino's name, pulled a gun. The alley door to the barrom opened suddenly and a swamper came out with an empty whisky keg. He saw Jed with a gun in his hand and ducked back inside.

Jed was standing in the pool of yellow light from the barroom. The man who had come into the alley opened fire, but Jed dropped flat on his face, as Reno had taught him to do. He did these things instinctively. His gun flamed and the man up there groaned and pitched forward on his face.

Chino Mellus was firing and Jed could tell by the bark of the weapon that it was a double-barreled derringer. Chino's hideout gun sent a bullet through the slack of Jed's coat sleeve. Then gun thunder again rocked the alley. Chino and Jed fired together.

Chino went down in the litter of whisky kegs and boxes. His bullet went skyward, whistling toward the stars. There was dead silence.

Men were choking the alleyway now. Jed got to his feet and pushed through the crowd that jammed the alley door to Clayton's bar. No one spoke to him as he pushed through and headed for the front door. The girl in the spangled dress, who had been sitting at Chino's table, had her hand to her lips, her eyes wide with fear as Jed passed.

Outside, he threaded his way along the sidewalk.

"They're both dead," he heard a man say. "Some shootin'."

"Here comes the law," another man said.

CHAPTER V

Return of the Gun Ghost

JED faded and went to the Pico House. He brushed dust from his clothes and walked into the lobby. Goldie Haines and Paula were just inside the door. Goldie's face was white and it seemed that she sensed what had taken place. She laid a hand on Jed's arm.

"We heard shooting." There was a questioning light in her eyes.

"I just killed two men." His voice was flat, cold and he noted that Paula's face didn't change expression. He felt Goldie's hand tighten on his arm.

"Were they—from Baker City?" Her voice was husky.

Jed nodded.

"Chino Mellus and another."

Paula slipped her hand through his arm and he felt the warmth of her body and somehow the bitter thoughts left his mind. She was speaking now, trying to keep her voice under control. She looked into his eyes and tried to keep her lips from trembling.

"I'm sure if you killed them, it was in defense of your own life."

Jed felt let down, but he couldn't help admiring this girl, who had stepped from the peace and quiet of St. Louis into the boiling maelstrom that was the West. But he fought aside any feeling he might have had for her.

For now the last barrier that kept him from Terry Rafferty had been pushed aside. He could return to Baker City and make Tod Crenshaw tell the truth—that an Agnew had not murdered Terry's brother.

Later that night Reno found Jed and Goldie and Paula, and he advised Jed to get out of town. The law was harsh with an outsider and if Jed should be recognized by some of the men who had been in Clayton's Bar, the sheriff might pay a visit.

Next morning they took the stage for Bearpaw, Goldie, Paula, Reno and the colored maid, Liz. Jed sat in a corner, his thoughts on Baker City. And as they rode through the Cahuengas and across the flat desert beyond, he knew that his next stop was Baker City. Chino Mellus had confessed. There was work to be done.

And there was—Terry Rafferty. . . .

The second night after the return to Bear-

trap, Jed told Goldie what he planned to do.

"I'm leavin' tonight, Goldie. I'm sorry, but I've got some scores to settle."

Goldie was standing near the gambling tables. The place was heavy with smoke. Light from the overhead kerosene lamp caught the yellow of Goldie's hair. The smile was gone from her lips and Jed noted that she looked tired. They went to a secluded corner. Goldie looked into Jed's eyes.

"I'm sorry it's turned out this way, Jed. I was in hopes that you and Paula—"

Jed's mouth tightened at the corners.

"I like Paula. It wouldn't be fair to her or to you if I stayed without findin' how things are in Baker City."

"There's another girl, isn't there?" Goldie shrugged. "It's the first love, and it seems that none of us ever quite forget."

Jed patted her arm and something choked up inside him. For a long minute he searched her eyes. This was farewell, and the thought made his heart ache. Then the image of Terry Rafferty flashed across his mind. He straightened, took Goldie's hand.

"If I don't come back, say good-by to Paula."

Then he was gone and when he stepped outside, the wind that comes with the spring cooled the sweat that was on his face. Grimly he turned to the livery where he got the Morgan and the pack-horse he had purchased the day before. He was ready to take his vengeance trail.

A shadowy figure came toward him and he could see that it was Paula. She had a coat pulled tight around her slim body. The girl came close and looked up at him.

"I saw you leave. I—I just wanted to say good-by." Her voice was soft, like the whisper of the wind that comes through the pines.

For a moment indecision was strong in him. He looked down at the girl, noted how her brown hair was tumbled and caught by the wind. Moonlight slanted through the stable door, flashing across her white face.

Jed's voice was husky with emotion.

"I—I don't know what to say but good-by."

Paula smiled, laid a hand on his arm.

"Don't try to talk, Jed. I know there's a girl at Baker City you want to find. I hope she'll be everything you expect."

Jed's forehead ridged. He took her hand.

"Yuh're a great girl, Paula—" His voice faltered, and once again he felt this girl's presence stir him.

But he forced the image of Terry Rafferty to come between them. Terry with her red hair and blue-green eyes.

Jed climbed into the saddle, waved, and rode out into the night, his pack-horse trailing behind. . . .

BAKER CITY had not changed much with the passing years. There was still the same dusty main street, the stone and wood buildings. It was Saturday and the town was crowded with saddle horses and teams. Jed rode into the livery stable. Si Jenks got up from a rickety chair, came forward to get the reins. He looked at Jed casually, then his jaw dropped.

"Jed Agnew," he breathed.

Jed took some money out of his pocket, gave it to Jenks. His hard eyes never left the man's wrinkled face.

"What did yuh ever do with old Nellie, the mule?"

Si Jenks looked uncomfortable. Jed repeated his question.

"Tod Crenshaw, the banker. He bought her. He—he had her shot."

Jed's lips tightened.

"Didn't want anything around that would remind him of an Agnew."

With his hat pulled low, Jed stepped out into the bright sunshine. He passed the Baker Bar and noted the spot where Tom Natchy had jumped him that day so long ago. He would be in his grave beside his brother, Mart, if Goldie Haines hadn't have come along just then. He knew he owed the woman much, in more ways than one.

Jed knew he would not easily be recognized. He didn't look much like the spindly-legged kid who had sat in the park that day so long ago, and waited for word that his brother had been hanged. Jed's thought went to Terry Rafferty, and he tried to keep up his spirits. But now it was Paula who crept into his mind.

With sudden resolution, Jed shut out all thoughts of Paula.

"I've got to find Terry," he told himself. "She's all there is in the world for me."

But first he had business, grim business. The Baker City bank had been painted since he had last seen it. The windows were shiny in the sunlight. Jed's heart crowded his throat as he walked through the doorway.

The place was jammed with ranchers and town folks lined up at the two iron-grille windows. Jed's eye saw a sign on a door. He stepped through a gate that blocked off the main part of the bank from the offices. A clerk came toward Jed, a sheaf of papers in his hand. He started to protest, but Jed stepped into an office, slammed the door shut behind him.

Tod Crenshaw was sitting at a desk. He was as handsome as ever. His black suit was pressed. There was a white flower in his buttonhole and he smelled of some sweet stuff.

Crenshaw looked up and the irritated look on his face was suddenly replaced with the stamp of fear. The man's handsome face was white as new snow. His hands were on the desk top and he flicked a loose paper nervously with one finger.

"Jed Agnew," he said, the breath whistling out from between his teeth.

Jed's bootheels slapped the floor hard as he moved to the desk. He stood looking down at the banker and there was no mercy in his eyes. For he knew this was the man who had ordered the death of his brother, Mart, and the killing of Bill Lash.

"Little surprised?" Jed asked softly.

Crenshaw bit his lip.

"I expected you. But not so soon. I just heard you killed Chino Mellus in Los Angeles."

Jed nodded, tipped his big hat back on his head.

"Roy Knight still the law around here?"

The banker nodded and some measure of confidence seemed to return.

"What do you think you can do, Agnew? You better leave while you have whole hide."

Jed's eyes lighted with amusement.

"You and I are takin' a walk to see Roy Knight. There yuh're goin' to tell him that it was you who engineered the killin' of Rep Rafferty, that it was you who hung the blame for the murder on my brother." Jed paused. "Then, don't forget about Bill Lash."

Crenshaw's lip curled.

"You'll have a time doing that. Your father and brother were no good. Who will believe you?"

JED'S hand flashed across the desk top and he slapped Crenshaw full in the face. Crenshaw's head slapped back. White marks, left by Jed's fingers, showed on one cheek. Jed brought out a gun from beneath his coat. Fear showed in Crenshaw's eyes.

"What you going to do?" he quavered.

"Either yuh come with me to Roy Knight's office, or I'll kill yuh."

If there had been any show of emotion in Jed's voice it might have been different. But his words were flat, soft-spoken, and Crenshaw showed that he knew it was no bluff. He shivered. There was a side door that led directly to the street. Jed motioned toward that.

"We'll go that way. Remember I've got a gun on yuh. I'll have no conscience if I have to kill yuh."

"Wait. Hype Rafferty is dead. He died last winter. He'll never know the straight of who killed his son." Crenshaw gulped. "Now listen. I've got money—"

Jed's face was cold. He motioned toward that side door again. Crenshaw got out of his chair. His face was streaked with sweat and it seemed as if the white flower in his buttonhole had wilted in the past few minutes.

Suddenly the side door opened from the street. There was a flurry of skirts, the sound of high heels rapping the board floor.

A girl stepped into the room. She didn't see Jed, for he had stepped back on hearing the doorknob turn. She was pulling on long gloves, as she spoke to Crenshaw.

"I discharged the cook today. She was fat, lazy, and she sassed me. I want another one before tonight's party. This time try and—"

The girl saw the stricken look on Tod Crenshaw's face. She suddenly whirled and looked behind her. Jed Agnew stared into her eyes—blue-green eyes. He saw her red lips and the hair that had turned to copper. Beauty, that's what it was, he told himself. Sheer beauty. He found his voice and it sounded strangely far away.

"Hello, Terry."

The girl put a hand to her lips, backed up slowly. Tod Crenshaw seized his moment.

"Agnew, this is my wife. You knew her as Terry Rafferty." There was a note of triumph in his voice.

The blow had fallen and when Jed stepped out of the mental wreckage, he felt as a man must feel who has pinned his faith on one goal, one ideal, only to see it vanish into smoke before his eyes. And somehow Jed's mind swung back through the years to the day when Terry had said: "I'll wait for you, Jed. I'll always wait."

He was brought back to earth by the girl's cool voice, with its undercurrent of tenseness.

"Jed—it's nice to see you."

Then she turned and with a final word to her husband about the party, she left. The door closed and the Terry Rafferty that Jed had known and dreamed of for so long was gone—gone forever.

His mouth felt hot, dry. Crenshaw wiped his forehead with a white handkerchief. He stared intently at Jed.

"You loved her once. Maybe I've done some things that haven't been—well, quite right. Ruining her life won't even the score."

Jed Agnew's eyes were cold, and the grim set to his jaw brought a bulge of muscle to either side.

"This is yore lucky day, Crenshaw."

Then he stepped into the street and went blindly down the sidewalk. The victory that he had visioned for so long was as empty as a discarded beer keg.

CHAPTER VI

Showdown!

IN THE Washoe Hotel, Jed got a room and climbed the stairs to the second floor. He locked the door and lay down on the bed. He could look out the back window and see the slanted roofs of Baker City.

His thoughts swung to Terry and it seemed as if his world stood still. She had been the hub of his life and now that hub was gone.

"What a fool a man is to try and plan his life," he thought. "Fate deals the cards. All a man can do is read 'em and play."

Now he couldn't kill Tod Crenshaw and ruin Terry's life. He wondered vaguely if she would leave Tod and run away with him. That was it! He sat up on the bed suddenly.

Then a familiar voice came to him. At first he tried to place the direction. He went to the window, listened. He raised it a crack. It was Terry's voice and it was coming from an alley below. Jed raised the window higher and listened again. He heard her words plainly.

"You've got to get out of town, Tom. My husband is already suspicious of us, and with Jed Agnew here to ask questions, something may turn up. You've got to do it, Tom."

Then Jed heard a man's heavy voice and it seemed that ice covered his backbone and froze his nerves. The man below was talking, and Jed knew that it was Tom Natchy, the breed.

"I don't run from nobody," Natchy was saying. "I'll finish what I started with Agnew. It'll be guns, not fists this time."

Terry's voice took on a new note. "No, Tom. I saw a letter on Tod's desk last night. It was from a friend in Los Angeles. He said that Jed Agnew killed Chino Mellus."

There was a moment of silence down below. Then Natchy was talking again.

"Yuh used to be sweet on Agnew. Mebbe yuh're tryin' to get me out of town so's he won't get hurt. Yore husband don't care who yuh run around with. He's got the Halfmoon Bar and that's all he ever wanted. Not you."

There was the sound of a hand striking flesh. Jed heard Natchy curse. Then Terry was talking again, her words sharp, heated.

"I've seen you for the last time, Tom Natchy. I'm going. I took a chance coming here in broad daylight to warn you. Good-by."

Then came Natchy's laugh and Terry's softened voice. A moment's pause, then Terry said:

"Don't muss my hair—Tom. Let's not spoil everything." Natchy whispered something and Terry nodded. "I'm sorry for what I said. Just get out of town and I'll see that Jed Agnew leaves."

There was an outside stairway that ran down from the second floor of the hotel. Jed stood on the top landing and watched Terry leave and saw Tom Natchy make a grab for her and laugh. Terry waved and started between the buildings.

Jed's stomach turned over. He recalled that mound of earth behind the Agnew ranchhouse and remembered Bill Lash and Terry at his brother's grave. He wondered at life—how it could change people. Then he reasoned that perhaps they didn't change, that the passing years only made the eyes sharper to detect the true from the false.

Natchy was standing below in the bright sunlight, a smile on his swarthy features. He was in his shirt sleeves. His black hair was rumpled and there was a brown paper cigarette hanging from his lips. The blue smoke came spiraling upward, to be whisked away by a sudden gust of wind.

Jed leaned over the rail and called softly: "Natchy."

Natchy turned his head, trying to locate the sound that had come to him so mysteriously. Then he looked up, and his eyes went wide, then narrowed. For what seemed like an age, the two men stared at each other. Jed saw that the breed wore no gun. Natchy turned suddenly, ran blindly into the back door of the hotel.

Jed came down the stairs cautiously. Two shots hammered out from the lower window. Jed ducked low, entered the hotel hallway. He had the location of Natchy's room in his mind. With his gun in one hand, Jed smashed his shoulder against a door. It burst into splintered wood.

JED'S momentum carried him into the room, straight at the crouching figure of Tom Natchy. Natchy was whirling. From some place up front, Jed heard a woman scream. Then Jed laid the barrel of his gun slicing along the breed's head. Natchy dropped to his knees, blood running down his neck.

The hallway was jammed with people when Jed dragged the inert breed outside. Natchy's boots thumped as he was hauled down the front steps of the hotel and out into the bright sunshine. No one made a move to interfere with Jed.

A teamster had halted his wagon in the center of the street and was watching the strange sight. Men and women crowded the boardwalks. A woman with a market basket over her arm screamed at sight of Jed and the bloody Natchy. She dropped her groceries and fled up the alley.

Then Jed saw old Roy Knight coming up the walk. The old sheriff had his pipe stuck in his mouth and the sun caught the metal on his battered old badge. His hat was pulled low.

"That'll be far enough, Agnew," Knight said. "Give me that gun."

Jed shook his head.

"Natchy here has somethin' to tell yuh. He's goin' to tell yuh how he and Chino Mellus waylaid Rep Rafferty and killed him. And how my brother took the blame."

Natchy was struggling to his feet. His brain didn't work fast enough to grasp this new turn of events and he was desperately trying to break away. His eyes were wild. Jed grabbed him by the shirt collar, twisted hard. Natchy fought. Sweat and blood was smeared on his dark face.

Roy Knight stood there, his weathered old face expressionless. He wasn't looking at Jed, but at Natchy. The breed was trying to free himself. His face was purple. Jed eased up.

"Talk, cuss yuh!" he growled.

The crowd was held. Not a man moved. There was not a sound, only the rattle of the wind in the cottonwoods that lined the street.

Then Jed looked up. He could never have told what caused him to take his eyes from Natchy's face. He saw Terry Rafferty at the edge of the crowd and he noted that her blue-green eyes were wide and that her hand was pressed tight against her lips.

It was then that Natchy bolted. Half his shirt came away in Jed's hand. The breed ran with the speed of light, straight for the side door of the bank. He knocked flat two men who threatened to get in his way. Roy Knight pulled his gun but was afraid to use it. Too many people were in the way.

"Why'd yuh let him go?" Knight yelled at Jed.

"He'll lead us to the head man of the whole deal."

Then Jed turned as he heard boot heels rap on the hotel porch. He looked back and saw Tod Crenshaw coming down the steps. The man's face was drawn and there were dark circles under his eyes. For an instant he halted on the bottom step and his eyes sought out the face of Terry, his wife, there in the crowd. There was a bitter twist to his mouth and suddenly Jed knew that Crenshaw had overheard what had gone on between Terry and Tom Natchy.

Without another word, Crenshaw threaded his way through the crowd, crossed the street and entered the side door of the bank. The street had suddenly cleared, for the crowd sensed gunplay.

Jed saw Natchy and Crenshaw facing each other in the bank office. The big shiny side window gave a perfect view to the drama. Jed started across the street. Roy Knight seemed rooted to the spot, unable to move.

Before Jed reached the side door, there was a blast of gunfire. He heard Terry's shrill scream. Through the window, Jed could see Tod Crenshaw slipping to the floor in the bank office. Then Jed was running. Natchy had got hold of a gun from some place in the bank office. He saw Jed coming.

The breed threw a chair straight through the bank window and fired. A bullet touched Jed's hat brim, but he came on. He seemed to remember those smashing fists of Natchy's and feel the hammering blows once again. He thought of his brother, Mart, and of Bill Lash. And he wondered why men lie and cheat and kill for power. Because he knew the empire of Tod Crenshaw was tottering. And Tom Natchy was the last to go.

AGAIN Natchy fired, desperately. Jed heard the bullet sing past his ear. Then he let go with his gun. His first shot knocked Natchy into the desk. His second caught him in the chest. Natchy crashed to the floor, tried to sit up, then dropped back.

When Jed reached the bank office, the clerks were still trying to fight their way outside. Natchy was not dead and he wouldn't die, according to the doctor, who arrived on the scene shortly afterward. Roy Knight, still a bit baffled, took the wounded Natchy to the lockup. And as the stretcher bearing the breed passed him, Jed looked

down at the man's face, twisted in pain. He felt no pain.

Later that day he walked down the street to the stage depot. He passed the *Comet* office and he gave a silent salute.

"I paid the debt, Bill."

Small boys were following Jed at a discreet distance. Citizens stared at him open-mouthed. Then he crossed the street to the stage office. He heard the loafers talking.

"It was Jed Agnew all right. Yep, he shoots Natchy after the breed kills Tod Crenshaw. Why, them two were behind Rep Rafferty's death."

"Too bad Hype couldn't have lived to see who really killed his son."

"Mart Agnew and the old man was shore enough hellions, but I guess Jed was all right after all."

Jed came up, and the men suddenly became tongue-tied. He sat down on the bench and watched Terry coming across the street toward him. Her face was white, strained. For the first time, Jed noted that those blue-green eyes were hard, calculating. She sat down beside Jed.

"Take me with you, Jed. I asked you once, a long time ago. Remember?"

Jed smiled grimly.

"I remember, Terry. I remember a lot of things."

Her voice was low, tense.

"I haven't been happy, Jed. I have everything, the ranch—"

Jed shook his head.

"Our trails divided that day when we buried Mart. They'll never cross again."

"But, Jed—"

"No, I'm going back to Beartrap. You see—there's somebody waiting for me."

Then the stage pulled in and Jed found a seat next to the window. The driver cracked his whip and he looked back as the stage began to roll, but the image of Terry and the streets of Baker City were hidden by a sudden cloud of yellow dust.

Thar's Gold In Them Thar Dogies, Pardner

ONE of the most interesting success stories of the West is that of John Chisum, who migrated from Tennessee to Texas with his family just before the Civil War. With practically no education, he studied cattle-raising on his father's farm, until a New Yorker by the name of Fowler turned up one day to offer him $6,000 to buy stock in a partnership agreement.

Chisum began buying breeding cattle for six dollars a head, with calves thrown in, and steers for as little as two dollars a head. Within three years his range around Paris became so over-stocked that he started driving westward from the Red River to the Trinity and Brazos Rivers. He was selling to the Confederate army for as much as forty dollars a head. When his contract expired with Fowler after the Civil War, Chisum bought the New Yorker out.

Chisum's cattle kept on increasing at such a great rate that he had to drive on farther and farther West, across the Concho River in Texas and then on to the Pecos. All the while he was plagued with Indian trouble and rustlers, many of whom started ranches with cattle stolen from him.

But once in Southeastern New Mexico on the upper Pecos River between Carlsbad and Fort Sumner, Chisum began to prosper beyond the dreams of mankind, until his critters were grazing for hundreds and hundreds of miles, and multiplying rapidly despite the ravages of redskin and white marauders.

It was John Chisum's westward drive from Paris, Texas, to Fort Sumner, N. M., that blazed the famous Chisum Trail, which was soon followed by stagecoach and railroad.

Though Chisum ended up in possession of more than 100,000 head of stock and an empire of land beyond reckoning, he never married. Friends say he never looked at a woman twice. And judging from the bronze bust now in one of the four corners of the foyer of Roswell Museum, John Simpson Chisum was a handsome man, with a sweeping mustache, a fine crop of hair, deep eyes and a powerful, tall build.

—Tex Mumford

DICK WON ALL AROUND WHEN...

HERE'S A GRAND. IF THE FLASH LOSES, I'LL MAKE IT FIVE
O.K. IT'S IN THE BAG
AFTER GUARDING HIS HORSE ALL NIGHT, DICK O'NEIL, EX-MARINE AND OWNER OF "IWO JIMA", LONG SHOT, OVERHEARS SUSPICIOUS CONVERSATION ON MORNING OF BIG RACE
BETTER ACT FAST, MR. HILL. I WANT "IWO" TO BEAT YOUR HORSE, BUT I HATE CROOKS
I'LL CALL THE RACING ASSOCIATION
CAUGHT HIM RED-HANDED, MR. HILL. THE OLD SPONGE TRICK
MY OWN TRAINER! HOW COULD YOU DO SUCH A THING?
YOU'RE A REAL SPORTSMAN. WON'T YOU JOIN MY DAUGHTER AND ME IN OUR BOX?
THANKS... I'LL BE GLAD TO AT POSTTIME
FIRST CHANCE I'VE HAD TO SHAVE-AND NO RAZOR
COME ON, USE MINE
WHAT A SWELL BLADE, EDDIE! NEVER HAD A FASTER, SLICKER SHAVE
THIN GILLETTES ARE TOPS WITH ME. THEY'RE PLENTY KEEN
O-O-O-O! IWO WINS!
I SURE WISH FLASH HAD BEEN AS WELL-TRAINED
I'M GOING TO HIRE A NEW TRAINER, MR. O'NEIL. ANY CHANCE YOU'D CARE TO TALK BUSINESS TONIGHT?
SOUNDS GOOD TO ME, MR. HILL
I LIKE HIS LOOKS
3
TO GET SMOOTH, GOOD-LOOKING SHAVES WITH SPEED AND COMFORT, TRY THIN GILLETTE BLADES. THEY'RE KEEN, LONG-LASTING AND FIT YOUR GILLETTE RAZOR PRECISELY. THUS THEY PROTECT YOUR FACE FROM THE IRRITATING EFFECT OF MISFIT BLADES. ASK FOR THIN GILLETTES
THIN
Gillette
BLADES
4 for 10¢

THE PHANTOM STAGECOACH

By TOM GUNN

When Magpie Stevens vanishes along with his rattlebox Concord, the lawmen of Painted Post question a plumb proddy assortment of outlaws — and get the answers in gunsmoke and bullet talk!

CHAPTER I

Magpie's Mail

A CLEAN desert wind whipped across the vast tumbled panorama of wasteland wilderness. Sheltered in a pool of sunny warmth on the porch of the Painted Post Saloon sat "Magpie" Stevens. His whittle-scarred chair was tilted back against the building. Its loose spindles, reinforced by a spiderweb of twisted wire, creaked as he dangled a restless foot. His lips moved as he slowly read the crinkly document in his gnarled hands.

"They're rewardin' me," the gap-toothed old stage driver informed Deputy Sheriff "Shorty" Watts, who was perched on the edge of the platform sidewalk. "It says here that on account of faithful past performance I am hereby awarded the mail contract for another three years."

SHERIFF BLUE STEELE

The irony in Magpie's tone escaped the little deputy.

"That's good news," he said lazily.

"It shore ain't!" Magpie said with a snort. "Not at the price I'm gettin' paid."

Two round trips each week over sixty rugged miles that separated Painted Post from Cottonwood—and civilization—was the toughest stage run in Arizona Territory. Magpie kept Painted Post on the map. His stageline was the lifeblood of the border country, serving all that wild, enormous expanse between El Paso and Tucson.

"But yuh make money on yore freight hauls," Shorty argued.

"I could make more," Magpie retorted resentfully. "I'll tell yuh on the quiet, Shorty, that a certain enterprisin' Los Pasos citizen has raised the ante. He's widened the trail down from Box L Springs into a road. If he makes me a proper guarantee I might—"

Whatever confidence Magpie intended to reveal was interrupted as "Doc" Crabtree ambled out of the saloon doorway, close beside him. The Doc, a quick, sharp-nosed man with a jerky billygoat beard blinked as the morning sun struck his shiny specs. A late riser, the town medico had just come down from his quarters above the saloon. He poked both hands deep in trousers pockets and yawned.

"Don't let me amputate the conversation," he said with exaggerated politeness. "Fact is, I overheard every word you said, you gabby old galoot. My bedroom window is right over this porch roof, y'know. So you're thinkin' about switching your mail route."

"I didn't say so," Magpie flared defensively.

"Los Pasos must have good reason to hope, else they'd never have widened the saddle trail that connects with the stage road."

Magpie squirmed. The chair legs wobbled dangerously.

"Why, yuh pryin' pill-pounder!" he re-

As Blue Steele's slug ripped through the planking in front of Madden's murderous countenance, he uttered an agonized cry, jumped up and clapped a hand over his splinter blinded eyes

torted angrily. "It ain't no affair of yourn if I jump my job."

SOMETHING happened then. The loose-legged chair collapsed under Magpie's agitation. Although it looked to Shorty as though the Doc's slyly outthrust foot had something to do with it.

Anyhow, the chair crumpled. With a spine-jolting crash, Magpie sprawled. He scrambled up, mad as a scorpion. He shook the mail contract in their grinning faces.

"I ain't appreciated in this dad-busted community!" he raved. "Nobody takes me serious. Well, yuh'll see. From now on I'm lookin' out for myownself, savvy? I'm headin' up the road right pronto, and if you dang squinch owls don't see me again, yuh'll know I've cut strings with Painted Post."

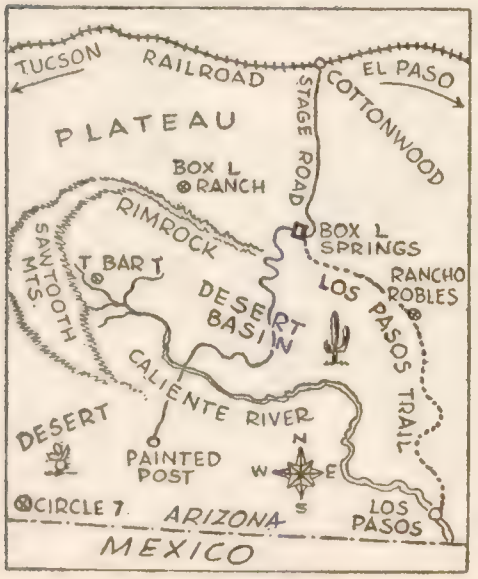
He sputtered up to the corral and a short time later his whip cracked over his six-horse team and his battered Concord stage-coach lurched northward in a billow of dust.

Soon after, Judge John Bertram rode into town. Bertram owned T Bar T, Indian County's biggest ranch, and was a leading citizen. He was a square-built man, ruddy-jowled and white-haired. At the Painted Post Saloon he found a knot of citizens buzzing over Magpie's threat.

"What's eatin' on that horny-headed old sidewinder?" Bertram rumbled. "He whooped past me without so much as a wave of the hand."

"He has got bit by the bug of progress," Shorty said lightly.

Doc Crabtree furnished the particulars.



Route of Magpie Stevens' stage line

Bertram's face went grim.

"This is plumb serious. That hidebound hyena might be just mad enough to sign up with Los Pasos. We better do something. Where's the Sheriff?"

"He rid down to Circle Seven last night," Shorty told him.

"What for?"

"Ask him. Here he comes now."

There was no mistaking the light, rapid hoofbeat of the steel-dust gelding, prized mount of the Sheriff of Painted Post. Seeing Bertram's moon-gray at the saloon hitch-rail, Blue Steele stepped from saddle, crossed the plank sidewalk and went through the batwing doors. Inside, he nodded to his friends gathered there.

Sheriff Steele was a figure that the eyes of men lingered upon. Taller than most, his rugged face was bronzed as an Indian's. Indian-like also was his habitual calm. "Poker-faced," some called him. He had the reputation of being unsociable. He really wasn't. He was a man of action, not words.

He greeted Bertram and the others with a nod.

"Magpie's pawin' up the sod and shakin' his horns," Bertram boomed. "Says the Los Pasos trail has been made into a road and he might make that robbers' roost his stampin' grounds. They offered him more money and he rarin' to go."

Steele's expression showed no surprise. He hitched up his gun-heavy buscadero belt, to which twin Colts were holstered, took makings out of a pocket of his calfskin vest, rolled a brown paper cigarette. Everybody strained to hear his comment.

"Don't worry, Judge."

"Thunderation, you sound mighty confident."

The Sheriff's calm gray eyes regarded Bertram's agitated face.

"I went down Circle Seven way to make sure."

Bertram's frosty, lifted eyebrows showed he didn't understand.

"Circle Seven ain't nowhere near Los Pasos! What's Circle Seven got to do with us losin' the mail stage?"

Smoke curled from Steele's cigarette. He turned his steady gaze on Doc Crabtree.

"There's a Mexican family in trouble just below the border. A Circle Seven rider named Torres broke a leg, his baby has measles and his senora is laid up with some kind of fever. I told 'em yuh'd come, Doc."

Crabtree grumbled. It was a long ride to Circle Seven and beyond.

"Charity patients?"

"Mexicanos, even the poorest, never forget a favor," Steele reminded him.

Bertram made an annoyed gesture, as though fanning at a fly.

"What's the troubles of this Circle Seven buckaroo got to do with our troubles?" he demanded.

Steele drew deeply on his cigarette.

"A heap more'n yuh might think, Judge," was his mystifying answer. "Forget about Magpie. He'll cool off."

MAGPIE was due back in Painted Post before sunset next day. Usually he ran on close schedule. His arrival was awaited with more than usual interest by the crowd in the Painted Post Saloon.

As the lowering sun tinted the jagged Sawtooths with golden splendor, a cattleman named George Griggs glanced at his watch and snapped it shut.

"He shore ought to be on the down stretch this side of the ford about now," Griggs said with forced optimism.

"He better be." Thimble Jack, the sad-eyed bartender wore a gloomy frown as he stood on a stool to light the hanging lamp. "I'm low on coal oil and about out of likker."

The sun sank beyond the mountains. Long purple shadows stretched themselves across the desert basin. Still no rattle of approaching wheels, no familiar jangle of chain harness came to the ears of the anxious listeners.

Suspense thickened with the gathering dusk. Conversation dragged. Bertram paused in his half-hearted game of solitaire at the corner card table.

"What do yuh think now, Sheriff?" he asked restlessly.

Steele shrugged one shoulder. He didn't seem worried.

"There's clouds piled up in the north. He could have been slowed up in rain and mud."

The game failed to quiet Bertram's nerves. He scooped the cards together and got up.

"Yuh're generally right," he rumbled. "By Godfrey, I hope yuh're right now. I wish somebody had listened to the old buzzard's rantin'. We can't afford to lose Magpie. Well, I'm right hungry. Who's with me?"

Nearly all of them welcomed some diversion. The crowd sifted across the street to Chow Now's restaurant. When they had cleared out, Shorty sent an anxious glance in Blue Steele's direction.

"Sheriff, if Los Pasos won him over, it means we'll have to go twelve miles for mail, to that box at the Box L forks where Los Pasos always got theirs."

DEPUTY SHORTY WATTS

"One thing which can't be left in a mailbox, miles from nowhere, is a barrel of whisky," Thimble Jack said morosely.

Steele was silent. When he and Shorty adjourned to the jail office, clouds blotted out the northern stars. An uneasy gust bore the pungent fragrance of greasewood, always more noticeable as a storm neared.

Nine o'clock came and went. Still no stage. Bertram barged into the jail office as Shorty was crawling into his cot blankets for the night.

"This shore is a devil of thing to ask yuh to do, this time of night, Sheriff," he exploded. "But I've talked it over with the boys and decided we meet any offer that Los Pasos makes. We aim to keep that greedy old hyena, his string of rat-tailed cayuses and the dilapidated pepperbox he calls a stagecoach."

Steele looked up from a law book he was poring over.

"Meanin' I'm to carry yore message to Magpie?"

"A man on a fast hoss might get to him before he closes a deal with somebody else."

Steele laid the law book on his flat-topped desk, got up and reached for his hat and gunbelt on a wallhook.

"Climb back in your number elevens, segundo," he said to Shorty. "Better dig out our ponchos, too. Might be wet before we get back."

"I plumb hate to ask it of yuh on a night like this," Bertram murmured in apologetic tones.

A thin smile flickered at Steele's lips.

"The truth is, Judge, I'm sort of glad to go. Magpie is cantakerous sometimes, but he's dependable. He deserves more than he's been makin', I'd say."

With a wet wind in their faces, Steele and Shorty long-loped up the stage road, splashed across the gravelly shallows at the Caliente ford and began the long, gradual ascent toward a dark barrier of rimrock. They climbed the rimrock switchbacks and paused on top to blow their horses.

Shorty got down to ease the cinch on his round, fat pinto.

"When I was a ordinary cowpoke I used to think that the life of a lawman was all guns and glory," he mused. "Not a dull grind like this. Pullin' Magpie out of a mudhole is about our most excitin' prospect."

"There's something deeper than mud in this stage fight, segundo."

"What yuh drivin' at, huh?"

"At something that Mexican rider Torres told me about. Hullo, a drop of rain. We better travel."

They loped again, through dip and over rise, until the road plunged sharply onto a broad ceinega flat. This was Box L Springs. It was no ranch spread, but near the middle of the alkali expanse was a line rider's shack, a small stack of meadow hay and a small corral.

Rain was sheeting down in a fine mist now. Their ponchos glistened wetly as Steele struck a match and looked inside a packing box nailed to a post—the mailbox. He uttered a small exclamation as he drew out a canvas mailsack.

"Say, how yuh figger that?" Shorty cried. "It shows Magpie got this far, yet we ain't seen no sign of him."

Steele opened the mailsack and struck another match. He didn't exclaim this time. But the little deputy saw his jaws knot hard as the light flickered out.

"Painted Post mail," Steele said in a flat voice.

"Migosh! Then—then he headed for Los Pasos!"

"It does look like that to an ordinary observer, doesn't it?" Steele remarked.

"No doubt about it," Shorty snapped. "And if yuh asked me, he double-crossed all his old pards an' the town. This marks the end of the trail, sheriff. We're sunk. I mean in more ways than one, what with the rain comin' down like the flood that floated the Ark an' them animals."

"Don't jump to conclusions so quick," Steele advised. "I've got an idea. Climb aboard your cayuse pronto."

CHAPTER II

Scarletto

CHUCKING the mailsack back into the box, Steele kneed the gelding ahead a few yards to the turnoff. In the greasy-slick adobe mud he saw wheeltracks. They left the old road, taking what had been a trail.

"Looks like yore confidence in Magpie was sort of misplaced," Shorty fumed. "The Judge was right and you were wrong, Sheriff."

Steele's answer was to tilt an accumulation of rainwater from his curl-brimmed Stetson. He lifted rein. The gelding responded. Shorty spurred after him.

"This shore jolts my faith in human nature," the little deputy sputtered. "I hope we get to Los Pasos in time to put in our bid."

The storm was at their backs as they crossed a gunsight gap in the dark Caliente Hills and sped down a long straightway across Rancho Robles, which bounded T Bar T range on the east. They rode hard but it was after midnight when murky lights loomed ahead, on an oxbow of bottomland beside the lower Caliente.

As they sloshed along Los Pasos' deserted main street toward the Tecolote Club, bright center of night doings, they passed on their right the pole-sided town corral.

Inside they both saw the blurred form of a stagecoach.

"I bet we're too late," Shorty croaked. "By now Magpie is signed up and bought over, lock, stock an' barrel. I'd like tuh take a good healthy poke at him." They approached a saloon and Shorty got a glimpse of a man through the open doorway. "Look. There's Professor Scarletto now!"

"Professor" Mike Scarletto, a swarthy, rat-eyed rascal of uncertain ancestry, was Boss of the border outlaw town and erstwhile owner of the Tecolote Club. He was not called Professor because of any scholarly attainments. He had won the cognomen as a piano-pounder in frontier dives.

He was, or could have been, a musician of distinction. He was at the keys when Steele and Shorty entered.

The piano was across from the bar, on a platform beside a blanket-sized dance floor surrounded by gambling tables. The tall

Sheriff strode grimly toward him and Scarletto's tinkling waltz turned to the dolorous beat of Chopin's Funeral March. The onlookers snickered. Scarletto was timing the dirge to Steele's steps.

Shorty stationed himself by the door, scanning the bar lineup for the bony, raggedy figure of Magpie Stevens. Magpie wasn't present. Steele halted at the piano and leaned his elbow on it.

Scarletto looked up from under arched brows, as though seeing the unwelcome visitor for the first time. He ended his mocking, mournful march with a sweeping cadenza that ended at the top of the keyboard.

"How you, Pokerface!" He attempted a broad grin. He lost some of his assurance when he noticed the somber expression of the face above his. "You look for somebody, yes?"

"For two somebody's," Steele drawled. "I think you're one of them. If you're the smart hombre who put over that stage deal."

Scarletto's pudgy but nimble hand rippled along the keys, ending in an augmented chord.

"Since when is being smart a crime?" he crooned.

"Right often bein' too smart is a mistake. Have you signed up Magpie?"

Scarletto swung around on his stool.

"Mebbe you make mistake, Pokerface. You look for your Magpie. You see stage in Los Pasos corral. You say, there is Painted Post stage. But no. That is mistake."

"How so?"

"Go look again. Look good, Pokerface. That is my stage. I buy it. Look."

He whipped out a bill of sale, holding it for Steele to read. It showed that Scarletto had paid $850 cash to an El Paso firm ten days before for a Concord stage coach.

Steele managed to hide his surprise.

"Then you dickered with Magpie, then double-crossed him, is that it?"

Scarletto spun back to the piano. Both hands smashed down on the keys. The place echoed with the opening measure of a grand classic selection seldom heard in such a place as Tecolote. Then the volume of sound dropped to a capricious rendition of Rachmaninoff's Prelude in another key.

"You make words, but they do not make sense, Pokerface," Scarletto flung out of the side of his mouth. "That is all, yes?"

STEELE felt foolish. He had come far on a futile errand. It took iron restraint to shrug off the barbed insults of this smirking rascal. It was a trying moment. He would rather have faced a fight than the humiliation of turning and starting to rejoin Shorty at the door.

Scarletto flouted his departure with the sobby strain of "Hearts and Flowers." The onlookers jeered openly.

"That garlic-fed rangatang treated you like a small boy," Shorty stormed when they were outside.

"We'll play our own tune some other time, segundo."

"Migosh, I hope so. That's the first time I ever seen a pianner win over six-guns. I'll say this much—Scarletto shore can wallop ivory."

Steele hunched the poncho up snugger around his shoulders and lifted himself to wet saddle.

"Finding Magpie is still our main problem," he said. "So let's backtrack to Box L Springs."

They halted briefly at the Los Pasos corral, to confirm what Scarletto had said. He had told the truth. The stagecoach there wasn't Magpie's. It was smelly of new paint, a bright red. The fittings were of shiny brass. A trap was stretched over the top to protect it from the weather. Magpie never went to such pains.

The road-trail was slushy across the bottomlands. On the long straightaway up across the Robles range tiny rivulets gashed the newly-turned earth. Somebody had spent a lot of money making a wagon route down from Box L Springs.

It should have been plain to Shorty that there was something at stake bigger than mere rivalry betwen two border towns. But he gave more attention to trying to keep dry. His flaring bullhide chaps shed rain but some trickled down inside of them. His levis clung to his legs with clammy discomfort.

One thing did occur to him.

"You was right after all, Sheriff, about Magpie. He didn't ditch us, like the Judge and others thought. But where is he?"

Magpie wasn't at Box L Springs when they returned there in the inky pre-dawn darkness. Nor was there any sign of his passing.

"The Los Pasos stage must of brung the Painted Post mail," reasoned Shorty. "But why?"

"To throw us off the track. Which it would have if we had got here after the rain washed out the wheeltracks that led off toward Los Pasos."

"Well then, Sheriff, what'll we do now?" The little deputy was shivering.

"We're in for a ride."

"Cottonwood!" Shorty wailed. "I was afraid of that. I bet a dollar to a brick watch that Magpie is settin' out the storm up there, dry and comfortable as a holed-up gopher."

There was only one way to make sure of that. So they moved north. It was a journey that tested the endurance of horses and their riders. It was cold on the high plateau country. Huddling in saddle, Shorty warmed a numb hand under his armpit, the only dry part of him by now.

"I've rode night herd in storms like this and considered a four-hour trick a hardship," he said through chattering teeth. "Even with a good hot campfire to come back to. Sometimes I crave the soft, easy life of a cowpuncher ag'in."

The miles slid behind them, the gelding setting the pace. The hours dragged before belated daylight seeped out of the brooding sky. Men who measured their days by the sun missed it sorely. The wet-maned horses steamed and their bodies dripped with splashed mud.

The cheerless chaparral stretched as far as the eye could reach in all directions. It was an almost lifeless world. The only creatures that shared it with the two men were occasional lonely flocks of migrating sparrows. These white-crested weather fugitives Shorty called "Oh-dear-me" birds, on account of their doleful three-note diminuendo, which further depressed him.

IT WAS mid-morning when they sighted a ramshackle clutter of boardfronts built helter-skelter around a lonely depot and deserted freight platform. Even in ideal weather, Cottonwood wasn't an attractive spot. Shorty blinked drizzle from his pale-lashed eyes.

"Now where's that danged stagecoach?" His tone was fretful. "I don't see it. A fine thing if we missed old Magpie along the way."

Steele reined in before a barn that bore a faded sign:

SHANKLE'S LIVERY STABLE

They were met by Sam Shankle, a shambling, blue-nosed man with a turned-up sheepskin collar and knee-high rubber boots.

"Long time no see," he greeted them, rubbing his hands together. "Magpie? Heck, didn't yuh pass him?"

"Yuh mean he ain't here?" Shorty yawped.

"Shucks, no. Pulled out yestiddy morning. On the dot, as usual."

Steele looked at Shankle keenly.

"Yuh're right positive of that, Sam?"

"I shore am!" Shankle declared with more emphasis than seemed necessary.

"Ahead of the Los Pasos stage?"

Shankle gripped his hands together.

"So yuh know about that. They unloaded it offen a flat car yestiddy. Or was it the night before? Magpie, he wasn't awful happy about it."

Shorty was astounded by Steele's next words.

"Reckon we by-passed Magpie somehow," he said off-handedly. "Put up the hosses, Sam. See you later."

As soon as they were out of the livery man's hearing, Shorty's surprise broke forth.

"Migosh, Sheriff, why'd yuh say that?" he said. "Yuh know blame well we couldn't have missed Magpie if he was on the road. And there ain't no reason he'd have left the road."

Steele's face was more somber than usual.

"Keep a tight lip, segundo. I don't like the looks of this. A stagecoach doesn't just disappear into desert air."

"Yuh figger Sam lied?" Shorty asked in an awed voice.

"No. But the chances are he isn't telling all he knows."

They came to a steamy-windowed establishment labeled "Apache Cafe." Shorty halted and sniffed. He dived inside, plopped down at the counter and emitted a yelp.

"Bring 'er on and pile 'er high, Fatso!"

The Sheriff had paused to roll a smoke and look at a window pane pasted over with wrapping paper where a bullethole had shattered it, recently so it seemed. A barrel-shaped man waddled out of the kitchen bearing two cups of coffee.

"Out of grub," he said dully.

"Not even ham and aigs?" Shorty cried.

"No ham, no hen fruit, no nuthin'!" the fat man declared, scratching a match under the counter and applying it to his gurgling corncob. "That Los Pasos crowd done et me out clean."

"Must have been a big jamboree," Steele remarked, taking his eyes from the shattered window.

"Sounded like it. I dassn't poke my head out night afore last. Bullets whizzed like bees till the new stage pulled out." Then he added hastily, "But I ain't makin' no complaint, boys. It was all in good fun."

"Nice clean fun," Steele agreed drily, tasting the coffee, his eyes going to the bullet-broken window again. He prepared to pump

the fat man without alarming him, but the faraway toot of a locomotive interrupted his plans.

"Here comes the local eastbound freight," said Fatso hopefully. "Hope it brings grub. Them Los Pasos gents even cleaned out the store. It's bare as a locust-hit farm."

Shorty gulped his coffee and laid his weary head on his arms. Steele watched through a smudged window until the freight puffed beside the station platform and ground to a stop. He grew tense, suddenly alert, as three men in cow-country garb appeared, trotting toward Shankle's livery barn.

He dropped his cigarette, crushing it beneath his heel. One of the trio he recognized. Walt Madden, a Robles puncher, was a notorious troublemaker and bully.

"Have those desperadoes taken up local residence?" Steele asked.

THE fat man rapped ashes out of his pipe without disturbing the gently-snoring Shorty.

"They was customers of mine night afore last," he admitted cautiously.

"Looked to me like they got off that freight."

"Did it?" Fatso said. "I can't make out much through them dirty windows. But no use washin' 'em in a rain."

He went back in the kitchen and rattled a stovelid as he thrust wood into the fire.

CHAPTER III

Sealed Lips

THE trio hadn't come from Los Pasos, where they belonged. Steele was sure of that. When Madden and his companions went inside Shankle's place, he ducked outside, angled swiftly to the corral beside the barn and sheltered himself against it. The boards were weather-warped, the cracks wide between.

He couldn't see much inside but he heard Madden gruffly order Sam Shankle to fetch their horses.

"Well boys, it was a good job well done," one of the men said gloatingly as the livery man shuffled to obey. "The Perfessor, he'll like the way we—"

"Shut up!" Madden hissed warningly. "Look in these stalls. A steel-dust gelding and a pinto! They ain't livery hosses. Ever seen 'em before?"

"Blue Steele's!" one of the other men croaked. "His and that little red-head jaybird's."

Madden spouted curses. Hoofs thudded as Shankle led their horses to the saddle rack.

"Sam, you dumb fool, why didn't you say Steele was here?" Madden snarled. "Where is he now?"

"Wh-why, over at the Apache, Walt," Sam Shankle faltered.

"Yeah? What brung him to Cottonwood?"

"He didn't say, Walt."

"He didn't hey? Meaning you didn't have gumption enough to find out."

"Aw, be reasonable, Walt," Shankle pleaded in a scared voice. "I don't hanker to git mixed up in anything. If I keep my bazoo buttoned and 'tend to my own bizness, ain't that all right?"

"You'd better!" Madden snapped in sinister tones. "Now help us get these nags under leather! We're pilin' out of town before that snake-eyed Sheriff gets nosey."

Steele slipped silently to the corral entrance to the barn, vaulted the lower panel of the door which was shut and abruptly confronted Madden and the surprised pair with him.

"What's the hurry, Walt?" he asked casually. Easy though the tone was, Steele's rock-hard gray eyes were almost luminous. They glinted with an eagerness that drove the weariness from them.

Shankle gibbered with fright and removed himself hastily to the doorway of his sleeping quarters. He paused there, like an alarmed woodchuck on the edge of its burrow.

Madden's lips twisted.

"I got no time to waste with you, Steele," he blustered.

"You've got time to answer a few questions. Here's one: where's Magpie?"

Madden shot a suspicious glance at the shuddering Shankle.

"I—I told him Magpie tootled out of here, as usual!" the stable man bleated.

"There's your answer, Steele," Madden snapped.

"I asked you, Walt. It's the truth I'm after. While you're at it, tell me where the three of you've been for the last twenty-four hours."

Madden swung a saddle blanket onto his horse, screening himself behind it.

"Grabbed a ride to Tucson, then came back on today's local, if yuh got to know,"

he answered sullenly.

Steele moved closer, putting Madden and the revolver he wore in open view.

"You're a liar," he retorted. "You couldn't possibly have made connections because trains are running late, due to the storm."

It was just a guess. But evidently a good guess. For Madden flushed.

"That's dangerous talk, Steele. Yuh didn't let me finish. We started for Tucson, then when we seen we couldn't make it and back, we hopped the eastbound local at San Carlos sidin'."

"That's right!" the other two chorussed.

"Now answer my first question," Steele demanded.

"I plumb forgot what it was," Madden said carelessly, reaching for his saddle.

"Where's Magpie?" Steele repeated. "And put down that kak. You're not going any place till you clear that up."

Madden's answer was to swing the saddle onto the back of his horse. Indecision at a time like this would encourage him to complete defiance, Steele knew. There was only one way to handle a man like Madden. Seizing a stirrup leather, Steele jerked the saddle off. It dropped at Madden's feet.

MADDEN spat an oath—fighting words—ending with lips flat against his teeth. Steele's fist smashed against them, crushing them flatter. Madden went over backwards, sitting down with a splash in a puddle of filth.

He came up with his gun out. Before he could thumb the hammer Steele struck again. Madden hit the saddlerack and toppled, his face red-smeared. Sam Shankle's nerve cracked. With a squeak he ducked behind a partition. It was fortunate that he did, for it warned Steele in time to see one of Madden's companions draw.

A white-butted Colt whipped free of the buscadero belt with that incredible speed that had made the Sheriff of Painted Post the dread and envy of borderland. The sneak draw ended in a Colt blast. Madden's aide shrieked and dropped his gun. One leg buckled under him. Steele swung the muzzle of his Colt at the third man quickly enough to halt his slithering retreat toward a stall.

"Pick up your smelly pal Walt and prop him against something," he ordered. "So he can pull himself together and start remembering."

Walt Madden brushed aside the proffered help and rose dizzily. His eyes were as venomous as a cornered rat's as he swished his dribbling hands and glared at Steele.

"Yuh're in trouble," he mumbled indistinctly. "That's a promise!"

A groan rose from the man who had dropped behind the saddlerack.

"Oh, gosh, my foot! Help me, somebody."

Sam Shankle ventured from his sleeping room. Shakily he handed a towel to Madden who swabbed his bloody mouth with it. Then Shankle scurried to the wounded man and helped him onto one leg.

"Can yuh make it to my bed in there?" Shankle warbled.

The third man was calming the three horses that had shied and leaped at Steele's shot. Madden had called him Lon or something like that.

"Grab these halter ropes," the desperado told Shankle. "I'll handle Lorin."

The freight engine tooted.

"Forget the hosses, Sam," Steele snapped. "Chase over to the depot and tell 'em to hold that freight. I want to question that train crew. Get going!"

In a blurred command from behind the towel, Madden tried to interfere.

"Keep out of this, you," he snarled.

"Ain't I tryin' to?" Shankle whimpered.

The engine whistled again, loud in the wet air.

"You've traddled long enough, Sam," Steele warned the livery man. "It's Scarletto or the law now. Which side are you on?"

"Side with Steele and yuh're a dead duck!" Madden threatened him.

In an agony of indecision, the stable man rubbed one bootleg against the other.

"Have a heart, Sheriff," he pleaded. "I got to play the winner or close the cases."

"I can't stand this no longer," the wounded man sobbed. "I wish Magpie was here right now to rush me to Painted Post—and Doc Crabtree!"

Lorin was weakening. Steele jumped at the chance.

"Tell what you know and I'll guarantee to get you there," he promised. "What did you do with Magpie? Where's the stage?"

"All right, here's what happened," the suffering man blabbered. "Magpie pulled out, like Sam told you, but—"

The confession got no further. Madden viciously kicked his weakening henchman in the bloody, upraised foot. Lorin yelled. As though in answer, a final shrill came from the engine. It chugged and the long freight clattered into motion. The unhurt Los Paseno, Lon, Tom or whoever he was, took advantage of the din and confusion. He darted into Shankle's sleeping room, slamming the door

behind him. He fled gunless. Steele had forced him to drop his weapon.

"Look out, Sheriff, there's a loaded shotgun in there," Sam Shankle yelled. Behind the door."

In pretending to warn Steele, he was tipping off the fugitive. This was beyond question when he had added that last sentence. Fear of Scarletto outweighed any other impulse the miserable stable man might have had. By that, Steele knew now that he stood alone, unaided.

Steele leaped behind Walt Madden and jabbed a Colt snout into the fellow's wet back just as the door of the sleeping room was flung open and the shotgun muzzle poked out. Seeing the Sheriff shielded, Lon swung his aim to the wounded man clinging to the saddle rack.

"This'll cure yore lameness," he raged. "It'll also cure you of talkin'!"

"No, no!" screamed Lorin. "Please!"

The shotgpn boomed deafeningly, the report from Steele's Colt drowned in the greater sound. The awkwardness of his position had slowed Steele for just a brief second which might saved Lorin and gained the confession.

The bloody havoc was sickening. Even Steele, hardened to violent scenes, was sickened by the shambles resulting from that double gunblast. Lorin dropped, his face a gory, unrecognizable red mask. The man in the doorway swayed forward and fell on top of the shotgun, a Colt slug in his breast.

As Steele fired, Madden jabbed an elbow backward, hard into Steele's face, then whipped around. Steele was staggered and before he could recover Madden was on him like a starved cougar.

He grabbed for the Colt. Sam Shankle was seized by panic and fled the premises. With halter ropes flying, the three horses stampeded out of the barn, bolted through the town and down the stage road.

NO LIVING witness remained amid the muck and carnage in the livery barn. Madden was a powerful brute, ruthless as any animal and a master of all the tricks of foul rough-and-tumble. He gouged, kneed, twisted and clawed and the slime that covered him was to his advantage, making him as slippery as a greased pig.

Steele struggled only to free himself. He didn't want to finish Madden, for he was the sole survivor of the three who were linked to Magpie's baffling disappearance.

Locked, in a tangle of arms and legs, they hit the saddle rack, fell, struggled erect and lurched to the sounds of grunts of pain and battering blows. Steele still gripped his Colt but Madden's hand was locked on it. The outlaw's other hand groped for the holstered Colt. He was swaying and ducking as Steele smashed at his face and body. Madden's primitive ferocity made him insensible to the pounding. He mouthed hoarse, bestial sounds as he rocked to the impact of Steel's fist.

Minutes ticked past with neither gaining decisive advantage. It wore down to a contest of spirit and endurance. If witnessed, the fight would have made frontier history. It was a classic of its kind, even in that land of harsh, ugly episodes.

Madden still wore his own six-gun. But it was jammed from his fall in the stable muck, too slippery to handle or to draw without the use of two hands.

Gradually Steele's vigor ebbed, not alone from his terrific, unrelenting effort but from near-exhaustion after the long night ride. Madden clutched the Sheriff's throat. He forced him back against the saddle rack. He hurled his weight into a supreme effort. Steele bent under the savage force. He was near the breaking point. His fate depended on one last ruse. He locked his legs around Madden, hurled himself backward and Madden's next thrust sent them both over the saddle rack. Over and down in a floundering heap, in a confusion of falling saddles.

The fall jarred the breath out of the heavier Madden. He lost his stranglehold. He felt his strength going. He broke away and stamped. The kick grazed Steele's face. Then he tore back into the barn at a staggering run. Dodging into a stall, he clawed out his six-gun.

The cylinder was jammed tight. He wheezed a curse and ran down the aisle in back of the stalls. He scrambled over the half-door, picked himself up and crossed the corral at a slogging run. He got through the gate and at blood-blinded, stumbling gait sped back of a row of buildings, out into the muddy, hog-wallowy brushland.

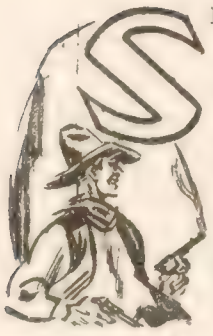
Low, sweeping rain mists had swallowed him up by the time that Steele emerged from the barn, hatless and disheveled but unbeaten.

For several moments he stood swaying on his feet, waiting to catch his wind and regain enough strength to move on. Pursuing Madden in the fog and brush would be a waste of time. The man had apparently had enough fight to last him for a long time.

But Steele was by no means through. He was following a plan, and now was the time for his next move.

CHAPTER IV

Madden Returns



SHERIFF Steele got his Stetson, pushed the crown into some sort of shape, pulled himself together and crossed rapidly to the depot. He lurched inside. The station agent sat by the telegraph keys, feet cocked on the table, hands folded across his stomach, eyes closed.

Steele showered the napping agent with a swish of his rain-soggy hat. The railroad man gasped erect. He had faded blue eyes and spectacles pushed up on a furrowed, baldish forehead.

"With all the shooting, your state of peaceful composure strikes me sort of odd," Steele said.

The agent dabbed his stubby face with a crumpled bandanna.

"Shootin' is as common around here lately as coyote yelpin'," he retorted. "I'm plumb used to it."

"Not even curious enough to look out?"

The high domed man flapped a limp hand at the windows that made a three-cornered enclosure around the telegraph instruments.

"Sheriff," he stated earnestly. "My job is to look up and down them tracks at train time, that's all."

"Fatso, Sam Shankle and now you. Scarletto has made a dent of Cottonwood's bump of curiosity." Breathing hard, Steele leaned both elbows on the counter. A welt on his cheek pounded and throbbed.

"You're going to tell me what happened to Magpie and the Painted Post stage," he said, rock-hard eyes boring the station agent's worried face.

"I don't know a blamed—well, just what do you want me to say?"

"When did you see Magpie last?"

"He was in here askin' after freight shipments and pickin' up the mail night before last."

"During the jamboree?"

"Oh, Magpie was plumb sober, if that's what you mean."

"That's not what I mean. When was that new Los Pasos stagecoach unloaded?"

The station agent twisted in his seat.

"A little while before Magpie started. Some Los Pasos gents was whoopin' through the town. All piled onto it and started bangin' away. High-spirited and jubilant they was and noisy. But no harm in that."

Steele had learned one thing he wanted to know. Magpie had gotten the mail. But the Los Pasos stage had carried it to that mailbox at Box L Springs. Magpie would never have consented to that without a struggle. It was his sworn duty.

"One thing more, Mister Southern Pacific. Who threatened or paid you to forget certain things you saw?" Steele snapped.

The agent tried to be indignant. But his seamy brow jerked nervously, causing his propped-up spectacles to drop down to the end of his long nose. He started to stammer a denial. Steele cut him short.

"If I notify the division superintendent that you're aiding a band of the worst crooks in Arizona, he'll have a new station agent here on the next train. Think that over. It might improve your memory by the time I get back."

Hearing footsteps on the station platform, Steele went outside. He found the fat proprietor from the Apache Cafe loading some crates and sacks onto a muddy wheelbarrow.

"The eastbound brung grub," he puffed. "Now mebbe I can feed you and the little gazabo, chief."

Food sounded interesting. But Steele's interest was more sharply attracted to a stealthy movement in a dark corner of the freight shed, behind a stack of baled cowhides. He heard the hollow sound of rubber boots.

"Come out, Sam," he called out. "I need you to lay out two dead men."

THE restaurant man dropped a sack of potatoes with a grunt. The color drained from his face. Then on sudden impulse he grabbed the handles of the partly-loaded wheelbarrow and headed for the cafe.

"What's the rush?" Steele sang out.

Fatso did not pause.

"I'm packin' up and gettin' out o' this town on the noon train," he flung back over his shoulder.

"For why?"

"Because I don't hanker to be here when the Los Pasos stage pulls in this afternoon, that's why," wheezed the fat man, splashing through an ankle-deep puddle.

Thoughtfully the Sheriff followed him. . . .

The noon train was late. The rain let up, giving way to a biting wind. Fleecy clouds raced one another across the wide, clean-washed sky, patterning the landscape with moving shadows.

True to his word the fat man set his hand

luggage by the depot window and paced the platform nervously. On a livery horse Steele made a circuit of the town.

A half-mile down the stage road he discovered evidence that had eluded him in the downpour when he and Shorty had come into Cottonwood. On a gravelly rise wheeltracks swerved to the left. The storm had almost obliterated them. But he saw where wheels had rolled over stunted growth and last year's grass. He followed this sign which led him in a wide half-circle back to the railroad tracks about two hundred yards east of the station.

There were cattle pens here and a loading chute, beside a sidetrack. A few sections of planking had recently been torn down from the stout enclosure. They lay, half-floating, in a storm puddle. He examined them as best he could, then rode along the tracks, back to the station and went inside.

The station agent was shaving in front of a small, fly-speckled wall mirror.

"I beat you to it, Sheriff," he crowed. "I'm quittin'. I notified the division superintendent myself. He's sendin' my relief on the noon train. It's three hours behind schedule."

"You're wasting a shave, amigo," Steele told him. "You're not going any place. That failing memory of yours needs training. To start with, can you remember where you keep your bills of lading?"

The station agent responded to the irony by pointing his razor at a clipboard on the wall. Steele stepped behind the counter, took it down and fingered through the sheets.

"I don't find any record of a stagecoach shipped from El Paso and unloaded here," he said accusingly.

The half-shaved man uttered an irritated exclamation as the razor in his unsteady hand nicked his chin.

"I could have mislaid it," he said vaguely.

"Not if you have your records in order, ready to turn over to your successor."

The station agent gave up his effort at shaving. He was trembling visibly. He faced Steele appealingly, his faded blue eyes watery.

"Have a heart, Sheriff," he begged plaintively. "I'd rather be hauled up on the carpet than remain in this dang-blasted place a minute longer than I have to!"

Steele lifted one eyebrow.

"Why?" he demanded.

"Because if I go shootin' off my face, somebody will shoot my face off," he wailed. "That goes for everybody in Cottonwood. Ask Sam Shankle, ask Fatty out there. We all respect the law, sure. But we respect our whole hides more."

"If all Arizona citizens were as rabbit-hearted, honest men would be driven from the Territory."

"I ain't worried about that. I aim to look out for myself. If that train don't get here before the Los Pasos stage, I'm goin' out in the sage and dig a hole and crawl into it."

"What's the latest about the delayed eastbound?"

"It's at San Carlos siding. Due about three o'clock."

The station agent looked at his half-shaved reflection in the mirror. He raised his razor but his hand was too unsteady. He sighed dolefully and decided to let it go at that. He folded the razor and wiped lather from his stubble.

NO USE to prod the man further, Steele decided. He would only lie and evade anyhow. The Sheriff returned to the Shankle Stables. In an empty stall Sam Shankle was covering the two corpses with a wagon tarpaulin Even his once-blue nose was dirty white.

"I'd give anything if this hadn't happened here," he said sickishly.

"The saddest part of it is knowing that an old-timer like you turned out to be a quitter," Steele said coldly.

"That ain't hardly fair, Sheriff. There's good reason for me to be skeered. I got to do bizness with Los Pasos, now that Magpie is —is through. Danged if I can see why a stageline is worth all this connivin' and killin'."

Remembering what Torres had told him, Steele could have furnished an explanation. The stage run was only the prelude to greater ambitions projected by Scarletto. Silently he saddled gelding and pinto.

"Pullin' out?" Shankle asked hopefully.

"After I 'tend to one thing more," Steele said.

He stepped into Shankle's room and got the shotgun that lay across the bed. He swung it like a club, bending the barrels into useless junk over the footboard.

"You won't invite desperados to use this any more," he remarked, flinging it disdainfully into a corner. "Now where's the rest of the artillery those lobos left behind?"

Muttering, Shankle produced the six-guns that Lorin and the Lon had carried. Steele put them in his saddle bags. As he left, he glanced at the alarm clock on a shelf in the stable man's room. The hands pointed to two o'clock.

A full hour yet. With the let-down, a heavy

weariness settled upon Steele. He led the horses through the back of the barn and to a feed rack in the corral. It was urgent that they feed and rest as long as possible. Out here he could keep an eye on them. He started for the Apache Cafe and Shorty. He was halfway across when a commotion down the stage road jerked him into new alarm.

Coming at a spraying gallop was the bright-red Los Pasos stage. On the seat beside the driver was the broad figure of Professor Mike Scarletto. All at once Steele realized that his visit to the Tecolote the night before accounted for his ahead-of-time arrival. Scarletto had anticipated his coming to Cottonwood and his attempted interference.

That wasn't all. On top of the stage, crouching behind the other two and gripping the driver's light carbine was—

Walt Madden!

This gave the enemy the advantage, not only of numbers, but of surprise. Steele was forced to lightning action.

Shorty was temporarily safe, concealed inside the cafe. But the horses were not. Steele turned and spurted for the corral. Savage yells came from the nearing stage. The carbine cracked twice. Lead whizzed uncomfortably close.

Steele was in saddle and out through the gate, leading the pinto. Scarletto and the driver ducked as he whipped out a Colt and thumbed out three shots fast. One slug raked new paint near enough to send Madden flat.

Steele bee-lined for the back of the Apache Cafe and gained cover just as the lurching vehicle came abreast of the place. The door was flung open on the off side and a pair of passengers spilled out.

"One hundred cash to whoever gets Poker-face!" shouted Scarletto. "Go make some easy money, boys."

Madden dropped from the stage.

"Go around to the right," he ordered the pair that had popped out of the passenger compartment. "I'll take the left. We've got him corraled. Now fog in there."

Madden charged, the carbine cocked and ready. His course took him within a rope's throw of the Apache Cafe doorway, on a corner.

So intent was he on the back corner of the building that he was oblivious of a movement behind the steamy windows. The door burst suddenly open. A blunt .45 was thrust out. Shorty Watts was behind it.

"Stay healthy, polecat!" the little deputy yipped, blinking sleep out of his eyes. "You ain't collectin' no hundred dollars!"

Madden swore and raised his hands. But he didn't drop the carbine. He held it aloft with both hands. He started to argue incoherently.

THE TWO others had gone out of sight around the right side of the cafe. Shorty felt justified in shooting. It was plain enough that delay was what Madden was after. The .45 banged and bucked. Madden's grasp on the carbine grip tore loose and the weapon dropped on his head, then to the ground. Madden stared in dull horror at his slug-shattered right wrist. He dropped to a knee, clamping a hand around the spurting wound.

Then the premises shook to a blather of shots in back of the Apache. The shots stopped as abruptly as they began. The kitchen door banged open.

"Good going, segundo!" came Steele's ringing voice. "Skitter back here, I've got the hosses!"

Shorty skittered.

"I must have snoozed off," he panted. "Migosh, Sheriff, yuh look like yuh been tamin' a treeful of bobcats! What happened?"

"Plenty. This is a finish fight, segundo. It's Scarletto or us. Hit leather and go for him before he holes up."

It wasn't a good time for questions. But Shorty couldn't hold back the one uppermost in his thoughts as he leaped abroad the waiting pinto.

"What become of Magpie?"

"Madden could have told us."

"Shucks, he still can. He's out front."

"Didn't you finish him?" Steele shot the query as they came from behind the cafe and saw the crippled man huddled beside the Apache's platform steps. He had the carbine at his left shoulder, aiming.

Steele whipped out his left-hand Colt, hurling himself forward just as the carbine spat. The bullet ripped the loose back of his poncho.

He fired. Just half of Madden's battered face was visible, the rest of him hidden behind the steps. The Colt slug ripped the planking in front of his murderous countenance. He uttered an agonized cry, jumped up, and clapped a hand over his splinter blinded eyes.

Madden was through for keeps. But the delay had given the stagecoach time to reach Shankle's Stables. Scarletto and the driver leaped down and dashed inside. Sam Shankle came out, remonstrating, and got hold of the leaders' bridles.

It would be a siege now, with the odds in favor of the main culprit.

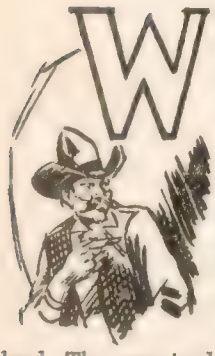
Steele and Shorty were made uncomfortably aware of that fact as they started toward the writhing Madden. Gunsmoke jutted from behind a loose board of the livery barn. A heavy rifle boomed. A bullet passed between the lawmen, thudding into the Apache Cafe.

They ducked back to cover of the building.

"Seems like I neglected one item of Sam Shankle's arsenal," Steele remarked ruefully. "That sounds like his thirty-eight fifty-five."

CHAPTER V

Magpies Fate



WARILY, Shorty slipped into Fatso's deserted kitchen and brought out a grablunch. As he did that, Steele took possession of the revolvers that were no longer of use to the two Los Pasenos who had embarked from the stagecoach and attacked on the ride side of the cafe. The pair had walked into Colt lead. The promised hundred would never be of any use to either of them. They were as dead as the other pair, laid out yonder in a stable stall.

The Sheriff had four six-guns now, besides his twin Colts. Three were fully loaded. He divided them with Shorty. The trouble was, despite their plentitude of guns, the .38-55 could outrange them. The livery barn was out of Colt reach from the Apache Cafe.

"We've got enough on Scarletto to swing him on a dozen counts," Steele reflected. "The problem is getting to him."

Sam Shankle was unharnessing the stage horses and turning them into the corral.

"Reckon they killed Magpie?" Shorty asked.

"All I know is what happened to the missing stage," Steele told him. "It was a slick dodge they pulled. When Magpie started for Painted Post yesterday morning, he was waylaid just outside of Cottonwood and forced to make a big half-circle to the loading pens. The flat car that brought the Los Pasos stage was there, as the westbound stood on the siding. They used planking from the loading pen fence to unload the Los Pasos stage and load Magpie's Concord on. Then the train pulled out."

"But they was in plain sight of the whole town, Sheriff!"

"The town and everybody here has been properly cowed. As for the train crew, they couldn't kick. The Los Pasos stagecoach wasn't waybilled for Cottonwood. It was through freight, to some destination beyond. So the westbound arrived with a stagecoach on a flat car, and left with a stagecoach. Savvy?"

Shorty puckered his lips into an amazed whistle.

"Say, that's the slickest stunt I ever heerd of!"

"Scarletto is a schemer. That isn't all. He made that bold play to establish a mail run to Los Pasos for an important purpose."

"What was that, huh?"

"He's been pulling wires to have Los Pasos designated as a border port of entry. That calls for a regular transportation line."

"A port of entry intuh Mexico! Migosh, Los Pasos will be the most important place between El Pasos and Nogales if that happens. Painted Post won't amount to beans. Speakin' of beans—"

"Easy on that grub, segundo. Make it last. But Los Pasos won't ever be a port of entry, with customs house and all the business it means."

"Is that something else yuh found out while I bedded down on that blamed lunch counter?"

"No. Torres told me, down at Circle Seven. Torres has a cousin in the Mex customs service. He told Torres that the big politicos won't deal with Scarletto. He and his kind have caused too much boarder trouble already."

"Now I savvy why you was so dead sure that Magpie wouldn't quit us."

"He wouldn't once I told him whatever glittering guarantee Scarletto offered was worthless. When the port of entry thing fell through, he'd drop Magpie. But as it turned out, Magpie didn't get the chance to throw in with Scarletto, who preferred to eliminate him. My own notion is that Magpie got his hackle up when he saw the new stage and threatened competition."

"Exackly what the onery old horned toad would do. Well, Sheriff, if they killed him, everybody connected with the whole scheme, from the Perfessor on down, is guilty of murder, huh?"

Steele's granite eyes glinted in his haggard face.

"We can just about hang the whole town of Los Pasos." he agreed. "But we've got to grab Scarletto first."

As Steele concluded his explanation, he peered warily around the front corner of the building. He was in time to see Walt Madden

leaving the porch steps, groping blindly toward the livery barn.

"Come back, hombre!" Steele shouted.

Madden swayed half around. He was an abominable mess of filth and blood, but still defiant.

"Shoot!" he called out hoarsely. "Nuthin' matters now."

He plunged on. Steele shrugged.

"Better let him have it, Sheriff," Shorty urged savagely. "A half-dead snake is always dangerous."

"The important thing is that he left the carbine behind," Steele said.

SHORTY grasped the possibilities of that. If enough loads were in the magazine, they could make things uncomfortable over at the livery stable. He dropped flat and started a wriggling advance for the porch steps, which were between him and the hidden rifleman. His close-knit five-feet-two served him in good stead. A larger man could not have found concealment behind so low a barrier.

He got the abandoned gun, leaped up and scuttled back. The .38-55 boomed. A front window of the Apache collapsed in a thousand sharp, shattered fragments as he flitted past it, returning to Steele untouched. He levered out cartridges.

"Only four," the little deputy said in disappointment.

Steele tense, mindful of a thin, bluish haze that eddied out through the broken window, continued to watch.

"Smoke! Quick, segundo!"

They weren't quick enough. A gust of heat smote them as they flung open the back door of the eating place. The kitchen swirled with an oily blaze.

"No wonder Madden vamoosed," Shorty cried. "The last act of that crippled sidewinder was to sneak inside, dump coal oil from a lamp and touch it off."

"We've got to clear out," Steele said. The building would be useless as a shelter in a few minutes. Already smoke trickled through the roof. "Hit leather and streak for the depot."

They were in saddle and away together in a mad race. The 38-55 licked out three times before they were safe behind the freight platform.

Shorty was grinning when they reached shelter. "The Perfessor is better in front of a planner than behind a gun," was his comment.

The Apache was a pillar of fire by now, crackling fiercely. Walt Madden stumbled against the red stagecoach, steadying himself to waste his waning strength in wild, jeering laughter.

Fatso and the station agent huddled against the freight shed, watching the fire.

"I'm out of bizness for sure now," the cafe man mourned.

"Yuh don't feel no worse'n I do," Shorty yapped. "I could have had a whole ham that I seen in there as well as not. Plus a lot of pertaters."

Steele's keen hearing was first to catch the hum of singing rails. He flung a look west along the tracks and saw a plume of engine smoke. Then a faraway whistle sounded.

"Hooray!" the station agent yipped. "Here comes old Number Seventy-nine. I'm a free man, or soon will be. Headed East!"

"You're a material witness and headed for Painted Post," Steele reminded him. "Climb aboard that train and I'll jerk you out of your socks."

The train rounded a wide bend and loomed into sight, growing fast as the perspective diminished. The station agent shaded his faded eyes with a hand.

"Something funny there," he shouted. "Something hooked on in front of the engine. Now what could it be?"

Soon they all saw it.

"Migosh, a flat car!" Shorty screeched. "With Magpie's ol' stagecoach on it—battered and muddy but all there."

Minutes later the greatest surprise of all greeted them. Turkey-necked, gap-toothed, whiskery and a little more windwhipped and dilapidated than usual, Magpie Stevens poked his head out of the inside of the old Concord. He spat finecut juice jauntily to the breeze and waved a greeting.

The gossipy old stage driver told the most exciting story of his career when he hopped out onto the station platform.

"What happened?" he jabbered, snapping his suspenders over a proud chest. "Oh, not much. Walt Madden and a pair of bandits tied me up inside my own stage and piled it on the train. They shoved it off as we crossed an arroyo this side of San Carlos. It would've been smashed to smithereens and me with it, except for the storm. The arroyo was running, river-size. Me and old Betsy here doggone near splashed all the water out of that dang river, then drifted rightside up onto a sandbar. I hoofed it into San Carlos. Some Injuns with ponies pulled Betsy out. That's about all, except that they loaded me onto another flat car on the siding there, and when Number Seventy-nine come

along, shunted me onto the main track. Here I am. Wonder what them wide-loopers done with my hosses?"

Steele did not seem so spellbound by Magpie's adventure as the others, but he heard every word. He was watching Sam Shankle's establishment sharply, steadily. Now, if ever, Professor Mike Scarletto's nerve would break. His grand scheme had failed. The longer he hid in the livery barn, the smaller his chance to escape final calamity.

The Sheriff was ready when a horse and rider streaked out from behind the barn, heading south. There was no mistaking that squat figure. The steel-dust gelding shot away from the station platform like an arrow from a bow.

MAGPIE squinted a calculating eye, long used to speed and distance.

"I don't think it'll be a long race," he opined.

Almost as he spoke, the race reached an end. Scarletto, spurring frantically, wasn't horseman enough to keep to high ground in that kind of going. He sped onto a patch of bare ground. A more experienced rider would have known that the alkali patch would be a mire under the prolonged rain.

His horse stumbled, floundered and fell. Scarletto was flung clear. The horse got up and, snorting, dashed back toward the corral. Scarletto, dazed, floundered to his feet. He was rounder than ever, a veritable mudball. Clean and sharp on a gravelly rise stood the steel-dust gelding.

The Sheriff's Colt was leveled and his crackling order drifted back to the onlookers. Scarletto raised his empty, mud-dribbling hands and plodded meekly toward his captor.

"The high and mighty hath fallen!" quoth Magpie, stuffing a fresh wad of finecut into his mouth. "And I wish he'd broke his neck."

"The Arizona hangman would have tended to that if you hadn't ruined a perfect murder case," Shorty said regretfully. "By turnin' up alive."

Magpie beamed. This was the kind of talk he liked to hear. It meant that he was back among friends. The kind of friends who hazed and taunted him, yet gambled with their own lives to protect his. He rubbed his hands together briskly.

"Now rustle out that freight," he told the station agent. "And hand over the mail. I'm behind schedule."

FIVE BIG HEADLINERS IN OUR NEXT ISSUE!

THE HIGH-PEAKED BLACK HAT, an Exciting Novelet by Stephen Payne.

BUZZARDS FLY SOUTH, a Painted Post Novelet by Tom Gunn.

A TEXAN RIDES MONTANA, an Action Novelet by Gunnison Steele.

NORTH OF THE CIMARRON, a Billy Bates Story by Scott Carleton.

HAM GETS ALL PUFFED UP, a Howler by Alfred L. Garry.

Now She Shops "Cash and Carry"

Without Painful Backache

Many sufferers relieve nagging backache quickly, once they discover that the real cause of their trouble may be tired kidneys.

The kidneys are Nature's chief way of taking the excess acids and waste out of the blood. They help most people pass about 3 pints a day.

When disorder of kidney function permits poisonous matter to remain in your blood, it may cause nagging backache, rheumatic pains, leg pains, loss of pep and energy, getting up nights, swelling, puffiness under the eyes, headaches and dizziness. Frequent or scanty passages with smarting and burning sometimes shows there is something wrong with your kidneys or bladder.

Don't wait! Ask your druggist for Doan's Pills, a stimulant diuretic, used successfully by millions for over 40 years. Doan's give happy relief and will help the 15 miles of kidney tubes flush out poisonous waste from your blood. Get Doan's Pills. (Adv.)

Quick as a cat, Ham swings the huge steak which swishes around like a heavy club and smacks Moccasin square on the jaw, scattering sirloin juice in all directions

HAM AND VEGETABLES

By ALFRED L. GARRY

It's steak and spuds versus spinach and carrots when the gambler, Moccasin Joe, and Deputy Ham become bitter rivals!

MY DEPUTY, Ham, sits at the table long after I'm through. He slips a knife load of grub under his mustache and pensively chews it. His jaw works in a slow rotary grind like an old cow masticating its cud. Now, that ain't like my old pardner a-tall. Up to now Ham's been a bolt and swaller eater, giving his vittles a once over lightly with his teeth.

"Get a move on, Ham," I admonish, it being my week to do the cooking. "I want to get the dishes done."

"Don't crowd me." Ham replies spleenish. "A feller is what he eats. I been readin' a book. More chuckboxes are ruined by swallowin' unnatural food in a hurry than anythin' else. Vegetables, whole grains, and such chewed at least forty times to the mouthful is my diet from now on!"

Folks, let me say right here, that if I'd knowed all the misery my deputy's scientific eating was going to get us into, I'd have brained the lummox then and there with the skillet.

"We been doin' all right on steak and spuds, with a chinkin' of sourdough biscuits." I come back. "Not many men our age are so free of cricks and miseries."

"Yeah?" Ham questions, leveling his knife at me to emphasize his points. "Do yuh know there's food to build muscles, and other food to build bone? Why by eatin' the right grub, yuh can even build brain power."

"So?" I act plumb hurt. "Now you're blaming your feeble intellect on the food I've been feedin' you. Blah!"

"Yuh'd better buy Ham a bale of brain-food, Egg," a voice from the door joshes. "He's goin' to need it."

We jerk our heads around. Framed in the doorway is "Buff" Jones, his hairy old face split in a wide toothless grin. Now, me an' Ham have knowed Buff since we all dodged Geronimo together. Seeming to snooze with his chair tipped against a wall, the old codger can pick up more gossip than a keen-eared woman belonging to ten sewing circles. Under his joshing, there's a serious note.

"Better come clean, Buff," I advise him. "What's sour on the grapevine?"

"Moccasin Joe's reserved the livery stable's best buggy for Sunday. He's goin' to take Miss Annabell Weather out."

"Hump-aw-ug!" Ham chokes, swallowing his mouthful before putting full forty chomps on it. "Sunday? I got a date with her Sunday."

Head down, and legs pumping like locomotive pistons, Ham sets off at a high lope for Annabell Weather's Hasty-Tasty Cafe. She being prop. and hash-slinger there. From down the street, Moccasin Joe sees Ham heading for the Hasty-Tasty. He likewise commences to trundle toward the cafe.

MOCCASIN Joe, a gambler by trade, is an eighth breed. He's darkly han'some as a show actor, husky as a blacksmith, and crooked as a snake track. There ain't ever been any love lost between Ham and Moccasin. The way Ham rods the law shore cramps that tinhorn's style.

Putting two and two together, I reach up for my sawed-off, break it to see it's loaded, and head out the back door. I skulk up the alley to the open window of the Hasty-Tasty Cafe just as the two rivals bust through the door. They swing up on stools, glaring at each other like a couple of range bulls.

Annabell Weather flounces out of the kitchen. The only thing that's attractive about her is that she's the only unmarried female in a cowtown where women of any sex are scarce as hen's teeth. She's tall, rawboned, with a head of stringy red hair piled above a sharp longnosed face that's all, freckled over, like a turkey's egg.

"What'll you boys have?" she simpers, her grin showing a mouthful of teeth so dang uneven they remind me of the Wasatch Range.

"I'll have three raw carrots," Ham says loftily. "Scrape them please to save the valuable outer parts!"

"Make mine a two-inch steak." Moccasin looks down his nose at Ham. "Right rare, with a double side of French fries, apple pie, and two pots of extra black coffee!"

"My good man," Ham admonishes like a preacher. "Yuh're diggin' yore grave with yore teeth."

"And yuh're diggin' yores with yore nose!" Moccasin turns on Ham savagely.

"My nose?"

"Yeah," Moccasin cracks. "Always stickin' it in other people's business. Like makin' me give back the money I won from young Peters! Understand?"

"Peters had too much to drink, and yuh know it!"

Annabell flounces out of the kitchen.

"Here, here, you boys stop that! Stop immediately or I will withdraw my favor."

It's easy to see which way she's throwing her weight. She's favoring Moccasin.

Ham and Moccasin sit there glowering at each other while their vittles are being prepared. In a few minutes Annabell comes out of the kitchen. In front of Moccasin she planks down a huge sizzling sirloin steak and a heaping dish of crisp French fries.

In front of my pardner, she slams down a plate very snippish. On it are three measly carrots.

"Health givin' vegetable gold!" Ham enthuses, rubbing his hands together.

"Jackass fodder," Moccasin sneers.

"No darned carnivorous cardsharp can insult me that way.

Ham leaps off his stool, his fists flailing as he charges Moccasin.

"Oh, can't I," Moccasin jeers joyous, putting up his dukes.

He meets Ham's wild rush with a jab that rocks my pardner back on his heels. He follows it with a stiff poke to the breadbasket.

The breath goes out of Ham with a grunt. He doubles up gasping for air, weaving like a hard-throwed cow. Moccasin slithers forward, jabs Ham's shoulder to turn him sideways. With calm deliberation, he measures my groggy pardner for a bone-crusher to

his wide open chin.

It's just too bad for Ham. From outside the window I can't do nothing as long as it's strictly a fist and knuckle affair. My heart is heavy as I realize Ham's due for a licking. Then I see Ham's shifted his weight to the balls of his feet, and there's a quirking at the corners of his mouth.

Foxy Ham! Shore, he's hurt. But not half as bad as he's making out. Moccasin winds up a haymaker and whizzes it from his boot tops toward Ham's unprotected jaw. Ham jerks his head aside just before the blow is due to land on his chin.

Moccasin's hurtling fist grazes Ham's cheek. With the force of a piledriver, it explodes on the side of my pardner's thick skull. There a sickening grinding crack of shattering knuckle bones. Moccasin lurches back, his face screwed up with the agony of the stabbing pain of his busted hand.

The blow reels Ham backward. His outstretched hand gropes for the counter, misses, and plops down on Moccasin's huge steak. His fingers close over it. Quick as a cat, Ham leaps forward. He whirls the sirloin over his head like a war club.

Wham!

He lambastes the wide open breed side of the head. Gravy spatters far and wide. Moccasin tips back on his heels, crashes into the counter, and slides to the floor in a sitting position. He wobbles drunkenly on his seat like a ticked tenpin. Annabell fetches him around with a glass of water in the face.

QUICK as a flash, Moccasin shakes the cobwebs from his brain. Then sudden as a breechclouted Injun what's sat on a bee, Moccasin leaps to his feet cursing. His good hand claws for his gun. Ham, already in the gun-crouch, wraps walnut, waiting for the cardsharp to clear leather.

"Hold everything," I bellow, shoving my sawed-off through the window. "Holster, both you fellers."

I order Moccasin back to the counter and march Ham out of the building.

"You are forgettin' your rabbit food, Mr. Hamilton," Annabell calls to him very sarcastic as she wraps a hot towel around Moccasin's swelling hand.

"Horsefeathers!" Ham snarls, slamming the screen door.

Well, that done it. Because from then on Annabell's Moccasin's steady gal. . . .

Does that make Ham a better pardner? Nope. He's taken to reading something on the sly. He's as secretive about it as a preacher's kid reading a dime novel. When I come into the room, he quick folds the phamplet and shoves it inside of his shirt, like a lovesick gal hiding a secret love letter. It's all mighty queer.

And it gets more so. Ham goes into the yard back of the jail corral, paces it off, squints at the sun, and then commences to scratch lines in the hardpacked 'dobe soil.

Once, he takes a shovel and commences to spade the earth like a nester. Sweat pours out of his blubber as the early spring sun beats down. And Ham's sweat is just about the rarest fluid known to man. After a while he straightens up to ease the crick in his back, and then commences to work slower and slower. It's plain to see work ain't agreeing with my pardner. Suddenly, he hurls the shovel to the ground in disgust, crawls wearily to the top corral rail, and sits there with his brow gulched in deep thought.

Shucks, it's easy now for me to put two and two together. Ham's got hold of some information about the gold the Murdock gang of stage robbers was supposed to have buried in Sweetgrass before our time. Then I ain't so sure. Because when I come into the office, Ham is overhauling and oiling his hip-guns. His mouth screws into a queer smile. The man's brain has been addled by the crack on the skull Moccasin gave him. I got to humor him.

I commence tactful. "Ham, if I read the sign right, you're figgering to promote a little cemetery?"

"What?" Ham looks up blankly.

"That shovelin' you were doing back of the corral—and now you're oilin' your guns. Who's grave were you diggin'?"

"Oh, yeah, yeah," Ham nods serious, looking crazy as a locoed sheepherder. "I figger I've dug my own grave long enough—with my teeth. Plumb aim to do somethin' about it!"

"Shore, pardner," I soothe him. "I'll boil you up a mess of wheat for your dinner."

"Gee, if we only had some fresh green parsely to garnish the boiled wheat!" Ham's voice is positively yearning. "Parsley puts iron in a feller's system!"

"Certainly!" I humor him. "But, pardner, if you're plumb set on trompin' the war trail, be careful someone don't put a mite too much lead in your carcass!"

"Aw, Egg," Ham grins. "Buff's put me wise to somethin'. It'll be like shootin' fish. Come along if yuh want."

After eating his mess of long cooked wheat, Ham shoves his guns in their holsters, cradles his sawed-off in his arm, and

sets off in the darkness for Freddie's Bar. It's pay night for the crews working on the railroad, and things are humming.

At the big poker table, Moccasin sits, his eyeshade pulled low over his hooked nose and his beady eyes reading every expression on the faces of the men who are bucking his game. Ham plucks my sleeve, and motions me to a dark corner where we can take in what's going on without being too prominent.

The way the seats change at the poker table, it's soon evident that Moccasin is shearing the gandy dancers in swift rotation. Ham's eyes narrow as he watches the game.

"Marked cards? I suggest.

Ham shake his head.

"Nope," he says out of the corner of his mouth. "Moccasin ain't wearin' that new fancy kip-skin vest for nothing. Watch close. And no matter what happens, keep yore eye on the crook."

SHORE enough. When the pot gets sizable, and all but three players have dropped out, there's a sudden disturbance at the bar.

It's unusual. A sheepherder is picking a fight with a cowboy! It's the third or fourth time during the evening that the pair have gotten into a chewing match. Every head swivels to the scrap. Ham squeezes my arm, forcing me to jerk my head toward Moccasin and the fellers at the poker table.

Of course, all the players are twisted in their chairs watching the scrap. Except Moccasin. He's busy with some of the fanciest sleight of hand I've ever seen. He slips two cards from his hand into a concealed pocket in the front of his fur vest. Then his trained fingers shift across the vest, and snake out two cards from another hidden pocket to replace 'em. It's all done in the winking of an eye, and the fur of the vest hides them secret pockets like they ain't there a-tall!

Freddie, brandishing his bung-starter, peaces up the bar fight, and the men at the table turn back to their game. When they lay down their cards, Moccasin calmly reaches forward to rake in the pot.

"Steady, feller!" Ham bellows, striding toward the table. "Keep yore hands on the table. Palms down."

The fleeced railroad hands shift their weight, as though to rise and riot.

"Sit easy, boys," I admonish. "This is the law."

Moccasin, who's flushed lobster red under his Injun tan, glares at Ham with hot hate-filled eyes.

Ham circles the gambler, reaches over his shoulder, and feeling along the front of his vest, locates one of the secret pockets. He flips out several cards.

"Yuh fellers have been buckin' a cheater," he says.

An angry roar goes up from the bilked railroad hands. They gather in a knot, surge forward, fists doubled, eager to take their losses out of Moccasin's hide.

Ham's scatter gun comes up.

"Easy, boys," he cautions. "I'm handlin' this case plumb legal."

"In a pig's eye," a voice mocks. "Hoist yore hands, Sheriff."

We jerk around. Backs to the bar, and twenty feet apart, stand the waddy and the sheepherder who staged the fake quarrels. The shills! Their guns are covering me and Ham like a blanket. This is something we ain't bargained for. Slowly, I raise my hands.

So does Ham. Only my pardner lifts his sawed-off along with his hands. The muzzle wavers, centers on the big lamp overhead.

Bam!

The double barreled blast shatters the lamp, plunging the room into sudden darkness. Boots skitter fast as the phony waddy and sheepherder carom for the door. There's a threshing, smashing, and grunting like a riot in a bear's den in the blackness. When Freddie lights up his spare lamp, Ham's got Moccasin down in the sawdust, giving him a good knuckling.

Ham jerks the punch woozie gambler to his feet, and hustles him out the door. At the jailhouse, we double lock Moccasin in a cell. Then Ham hot-foots back to Freddie's bar. There, Ham gets mighty sociable with Justice Mirander, buying him drink after drink of Freddie's best red-eyed. And all of the time he's lubricating the judge, Ham's talking to him as persuasive as a lightning rod salesman.

"Don't know as there's anythin' in the statoots for it," Mirander tugs his scraggly mustache judicial. "But on 'tother hand, from my readin' of Blackstone an' other law, there ain't nothin' ag'in' it."

"Then yuh will?"

Ham's eager as a goldbrick salesman closing a deal.

"Well—?" Justice Mirander twirls his empty glass suggestive.

"Freddie," Ham crooks his finger at the barkeep. "A fresh bottle."

When Mirander has uncorked the bottle, Ham raps loudly for attention with the butt of his six-gun.

"Feller citizens," Ham tells the barflies.

"As a minion of the law, I've always believed in quick and impartial justice. The honorable judge," Ham bows formal to His Honor, "concurs with me. So here and now, we're goin' to try that miserable cheatin' polecat, Moccasin Joe Wells. I'll go fetch him from the jail."

IN A few minutes Ham prods the bewildered breed through the batwing doors.

"I declare the Court of Sweetgrass, County of Sweetgrass, City of Sweetgrass, State of Montaner in session," Justice Mirander orates. "Remove yore hats, gents. And let no feller what lives in a glass house cast a stone. But if any of yuh have got evidence against this low, dirty, cheatin' cardshark, let him step forth and be listened to."

Well, it don't take no time at all for the fellers who have lost money to state their case against Moccasin. When Ham exposes them cleverly hid card pockets in his kipskin vest, it's a open and shut case.

"Moccasin, I judge yuh guilty as the devil," Justice Mirander worries off a chew of plug. "And the Court hereby sentences yuh to a term in the Sweetgrass jail until the cabbages is ripe!"

"Cabbages ripe?" Moccasin can't believe his ears.

Neither can anyone else in the room. But Ham. He's nodding his approval, like a favored heir at a will reading.

"Yep, yuh heared me right," Justice Mirander is solemn as a treeful of owls. "Furthermore and to wit, there bein' no funds in the Sweetgrass treasury to feed criminals such as yuh, I also decree that yuh earn yore keep by workin' in the Sweetgrass jail garden."

Ham, grinning from ear to ear, pistol pokes the protesting gambler out of the deadfall and back to his cell. . . .

The next morning there is an awful commotion in the jailhouse.

"I'm used to a double stack of hotcakes with a side of bacon and eggs for my breakfast," Moccasin bellows.

"Yuh'll eat scientific, same as me, feller," Ham shouts back. "Spoon up that oatmeal and raisin gruel, and drink that health givin' tea I made by boilin' up green alfalfa. Quick too!" Ham goes on. "We got work to do."

"Work?" Moccasin can't believe his horrified ears. The lily-fingered cardshark ain't done a honest day's work for twenty years.

"Shore," Ham mocks him. "Didn't yuh hear the honorable judge say yuh was to work out yore keep in the Sweetgrass jail garden."

Ham shoulders his prisoner out into the back yard, hands him a shovel, and motions to the patch of ground that he's got marked off.

"If yuh want to eat, it's goin' to be by the sweat of yore brow," Ham stipulates. "Either yuh spade up the garden plot, or yuh can starve."

Just then we hear the distant whinny of a bronc.

"My hoss," Moccasin jerks up his head. "We forgot him. He's been tied up in front of Freddie's all night."

"Egg'll get him," Ham says. "Now, mister, you dig."

When I return in a few minutes, leading the gambler's fine palomino, Moccasin's got another gunhump on his cranium, which is commencing to resemble a pineapple.

But he's digging. Slow as the seven year's itch.

His hungry bronc jerks the reins out of my hand and gallops over to the fence where Ham is guarding his prisoner. Ham, who loves all horseflesh, stoops down, and pulling a big handful of green grass, feeds it to the eager bronc.

Now, this is sort'a getting ahead of my story. But then and there a great friendship is formed. That fine palomino commences to follow Ham around like a affectionate dog. All the time the Sweetgrass jail garden is growing, Ham feeds Moccasin's horse choice green morsels, carrots, turnips, and small cabbages.

The intelligent hoss is just like a playful dog. Ham tosses the vegetables over the fence, and the bronc catches them in his mouth like a pet dog catches a ball. It's comical to watch the palomino when he misses a tossed vegetable. Like a frisky dog, he whirls, races after the bounding vegetable, plows to a sudden stop, and picks up the tid-bit on the bounce.

"Look," Ham boasts. "That bronc loves green garden sass. He's healthy." Ham begins beating his chest. "I eat greens and grain too. And I'm as healthy as a hoss."

"Jackass yuh mean," Moccasin cracks plumb surly.

But to get back to my yarn. Moccasin shore don't take to gardening. He works with a scowl on his face and midnight in his heart. Ham rawhides him unmerciful. When, after a couple of hunger strikes, Moccasin gets the garden plot spaded, Ham fingers the soil and decides it ain't rich enough.

"We got to fertilize the ground," Ham decrees. "And this is where yuh earn yore keep double, Moccasin."

HAM rustles a wheel barrow, a wide shovel, and a broom.

"Come on, Moccasin," Ham orders. "Yuh're now the Sweetgrass City Street Cleaning Department. A regular whitewing."

Well, it takes three days of starving, and considerable physical persuasion before Moccasin decides to give our streets his personal attention. Flushing red, and muttering curses under his breath, Moccasin cleans up our street to the jeering of the waddies.

I ain't prepared to say it was Ham. But someone puts the fellers up to driving their whole remudas into town just to give Moccasin plenty of street cleaning to do.

As the season moves toward fall, the garden flourishes. Even I got to admit it's pretty nice to have a mess of greens once in a while. And like I said, Moccasin's fine palomino benefits as much as we do from the tops and surplus. He hangs around the garden fence when Ham is picking vegetables, his mouth watering like a kid at the candy counter. Come to think of it, I guess cabbages and such are candy to a hoss.

After the fall roundup, the bank gets in a considerable shipment of gold to pay the cattlemen. So Ham and I got to take turns guarding the place. Ham's on duty and I'm rustling a bait of supper for our prisoner, Moccasin, when Annabell Weather flounces into the jailhouse.

(Turn page)

BACK AGAIN!
MAKES YOUR DOUBLE EDGE RAZOR PERFORM MIRACLES!
6NX
REG. U.S. PAT. OFF.
PROCESS
STAR
DOUBLE EDGE BLADES
ONCE AGAIN you can get Star Double Edge Blades, made by the 6NX Process. During the war they were restricted to military and government use.
● 6NX—our secret formula of right steel, tempering and edge-making—produces a blade so keen, so durable that it is truly in a class by itself!
STAR DIVISION
American Safety Razor Corporation, Brooklyn, New York
STAR
DOUBLE EDGE
BLADES
4 FOR 10¢
for DOUBLE EDGE RAZORS

"Sheriff, today is Moccasin's birthday," she announces plenty nasal. "It's a scandale how Ham's been feedin' him a vegetable diet. So I've fixed Moccasin up a steak dinner with a big birthday cake."

Annabell screws up her face into what she thinks is a beseeching smile and plays her ace.

"I also brought you a cake," she tells me. "A coconut cake."

She opens her basket and puts a fine three-story cake on my desk. I'm a sucker for coconut cake. So I nod my permission for her to take Moccasin his birthday dinner. After all, ain't the feller raised Ham a first class garden? Ham's indulged his fondness for green raw vegetables until his nose wrinkles like a rabbit's. Why shouldn't Moccasin be rewarded with a steak treat?

I shore find out why when I unlock Moccasin's cell at sundown so's he can water the garden. As I swing open the door, he whirls suddenly, jabbing a wicked short barreled gambler's gun in my ribs.

"Up with 'em!" he snarls, his thumb trembling on the hammer. "One blat out'a yuh, and I'll let yuh have it."

"Annabell!" I ejaculate. "She's done us dirt."

Okay?" a voice questions warily from outside.

"Okay," Moccasin growls.

The jailhouse door swings open. The fake waddy and sheepherder, pardners of Moccasin, slip inside. Very professional, they hogtie me, slip a gag in my mouth, and lock me in the cell. Then they ransack my office, gathering all our guns and throwing them into the well.

Moccasin curses between his hate clenched teeth. "I'm goin' to fix that garden. I'll fix it."

He grabs a hoe, and like an enraged madman commences slashing at the vegetables. When he comes to the fine row of cabbages Ham was saving to make sauerkraut, he drops the hoe. In a wild frenzy, he jerks the cabbages up by the roots, hurling them to right and left. In a few moments the garden is a shambles.

Moccasin's fine palomino, which ain't been fed yet, jumps the corral bars and commences to eat the uprooted vegetables. The gambler grabs the hungry hoss's halter rope, savagely jerking the reluctant animal toward the barn. He slaps on his fancy saddle, and roughly forces the bit into his mouth. Mounting up, the three men rides past the jail, and I hear them whirl into a back alley.

An anvil hits me in the pit of the stomach as I realize the truth. That alley leads toward the bank. Inside the bank, Judd Williams, the banker, and his clerk are counting out the gold coins into envelopes for the ranchers, who will call for them in the morning.

I wiggle to a corner, inch myself erect, and roll along the wall until I can see out the window. Two shadowy figures are sneaking up the side wall of the bank. Desperately I chew at my gag. I can't make headway. I can't warn Ham, who is leaning against the front of the bank.

A single shot raps out. Before my horrified eyes, Ham slumps, sliding down the wall into a crumpled heap. They've done for him. I curse in helpless rage.

THE two men charge into the bank. There's more muffled shots. The sheepherder, leading Moccasin's palomino and the other hoss, gallops out of the dark alley. His gun drives back the crowd which rushes out of Freddie's place.

Moccasin and his pardner sprint out of the bank, each carrying a heavy sack. They leap aboard their mounts. The second they hit leather, Ham leaps to his feet. He's been playing possum. His guns buck twice. The sheepherder pitches sideways off his mount. The waddy drops his sack of gold, clutches for it, and tumbles headlong from his hoss.

Moccasin wheels, his gun driving lead at Ham. My pardner, buckjumping and dodging like a Hopi medicine dancer, is alternating right and left hand shots. Moccasin's palomino commences to pitch, spoiling his aim, but making him an equally hard target.

Ham's guns click on empty shells. Moccasin rides him down, trying to get in a close shot. Ham's bow legs piston furious as he tries to elude his mounted enemy. Moccasin leans forward in the saddle, draws a steady bead.

Ham's goose is cooked. No, there is no shot! Moccasin too has shot out all his chambers. He rises in the saddle, aiming a crushing blow at Ham's head.

Ham ducks under the rearing horse, stinging him with a sharp slap on the flank. The spooked bronc prances away. Moccasin, knowing some one's apt to start shooting, sinks his hooks, and streaks his mount down the street and past the jail on the road out of town.

Ham, throwing away his useless guns, leaps pony express onto the sheepherder's bronc, which is tied to the ground beside its

prone master. He thunders after Moccasin. The gambler is bent low in the saddle as he hurtles past the jail. Right behind him is Ham. Ham pulls up, unmounts, and rushes into the office.

"A rifle, Egg," he shouts.

"All are in the well," I shriek, grinding off half my face worrying out the gag.

Ham's eyes search quickly for a weapon. He sees the uprooted cabbages. Grabbing one by the stalk like a squaw's skull cracker, he swings into the saddle. He spurs after Moccasin. His grained bronc is faster than the vegetable fed palomino. At every leap he gains on the gambler.

They thunder along the ridge trail, skylined against the last rays of the setting sun. Moccasin twists in the saddle, brandishing his gun. Ham lays along his bronc's neck, offering a small target. But Moccasin holds fire. Ham raises a bit, offering a better target. Still Moccasin doesn't squeeze off his shot. Ham finally sits bolt upright, offering a target like a barn door. And Moccasin don't fire. He wants a sure shot.

We see Ham raise in the stirrups. Round and round, like a baseball pitcher warming up, he swings the cabbage as he draws closer and closer to Moccasin. Fifty feet, thirty, fifteen, ten. Then Ham suddenly hurls the cabbage.

We hold our breath as it sails for Moccasin's head. Just before it crashes into the cardsharp's head, he ducks. The cabbage sails harmlessly past him. It rolls ahead of his horse like a bowling ball. A groan goes up from the crowd as Moccasin's gun lances flame. He's got Ham where he wants him.

But no!

Like a roping pony, the palomino suddenly stiffens its forelegs, squats on its haunches, and plowing dust, comes to a dead stop. The unexpected stop pitches Moccasin from the saddle. He does a swan dive into the dust. Ham leaps off beside him, and in a second has the prostrate gambler hogtied.

And the hungry palomino, who stopped so short, is calmly eating the tasty green cabbage, just as though Ham had thrown it over the garden fence.

"Ham, the bank will certainly want to reward you," Judd Williams says gratefully as Ham turns the key on still groggy Moccasin.

Ham surveys his ruined garden. But instead of weeping, as I'd expected, a sheepish grin seeps over his face.

"Shucks, I'd been a traitor if I'd et all that garden sass," Ham declares, rubbing his chin thoughtful. "What'n' blazes would become of the cattle country if everybody took to eatin' rabbit food?"

"Shore," I cut in. "You been biting the hand what's been feeding you."

"Name your reward," Williams insists.

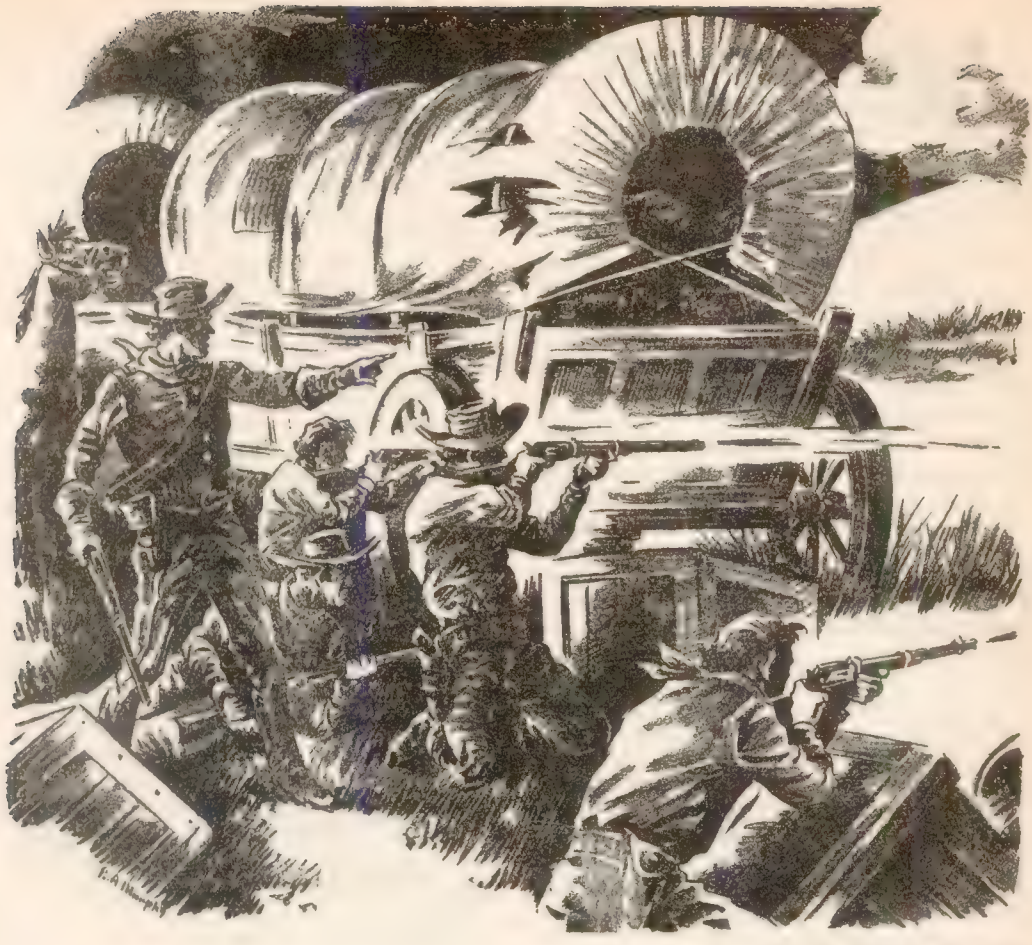
"Yuh just reward me with a couple quarters of prime beef." Ham licks his chops in greedy anticipation. "Then me and Egg can celebrate my return to a meat diet with a bang-up barbecue for the boys."

"Yes, I'm Rip Carson, the Outlaw— But You're Not Taking Me In!"

THAT was the challenge the notorious Rip Carson flung out at Brad Stillman—who'd come to the R C Ranch in Sentinel to straighten out a tangled legal mess. But after Carson explained the situation, Brad didn't want to turn the outlaw over to the law.

He wanted, instead, to fight side by side with Carson to bring justice to the range. Because there was a vicious impersonator in a high-peaked black hat who was committing sinister crimes and charging them all up to Rip—and that was only one angle of the strange mystery that stalked Sentinel in THE HIGH-PEAKED BLACK HAT, a smashing novelet by Stephen Payne featured in our next issue.

Stillman and Carson join forces to remove the grim threat that hangs over Marjorie Carson of the R C—and their fighting exploits deliver a two-fisted wallop in THE HIGH-PEAKED BLACK HAT! Look forward to this grand yarn.



The attacking Indians' raid

A COMPLETE NOVELET
By JACKSON COLE

A WAR FOR

CHAPTER I

Killing in Town

CAPTAIN WALLACE almost choked on the quinine pill he was trying to swallow as the tall young Indian came through the swinging doors of the Double Eagle. Straight and proud in his fringed buckskins, the red man paused briefly in the dimness of Sturhan City's only saloon, then moved noiselessly on moccasined feet toward the office door at the rear.

Swift silence fell upon the cowmen, Indian traders and mule-skinners as the young brave passed through—silence broken only by Captain Wallace's violent coughing fit as the quinine pellet stuck halfway down his gullet.

The presence of Mountain Rider, nephew of Chief Cloud Rider, ruler of the local reservation Indians, in the forbidden white man's drinking spot meant trouble—serious trouble.

Inwardly cursing his momentary helplessness, Wallace managed to wash down the pill with a gulp of brackish water and turned to intercept Mountain Rider. But the rash red man had already vanished from sight.

Captain Wallace was new in the West. After serving most of the Civil War out along the Gulf Coast, he had recently been assigned the command of Fort Sturhan. It was now three years since Appomattox.

A BRAVE CAVALRY OFFICER BATTLES AGAINST

on the wagon train began

CAPTAIN WALLACE

Under medium height, slim, wiry, inconspicuous, Wallace was sensitive about his lack of outer brawn. Other men grew bronzed, or reddened under the pitiless prairie sun. His skin remained an unhappy yellowish shade, relic of malaria picked up in the Louisiana swamps, along with his reliance on quinine. Whisky only made him ill.

Wallace had stopped by at the saloon, which was a mile from the fort, after a throat-parching ride over the surrounding plains, where he had been studying local topography, and learning the trails and creeks.

Remembering it was his duty, as Army post commander, to prevent trouble between the whites and red men, he turned and took a step toward the back room. He was brought up short by the turkey-red shirt of a bulky human hogshead with a stubble of pink beard. The fat man moved directly into Wallace's path.

"I don't hear Hod Alton askin' for no Government help," said the giant in a deep rumbling voice, glaring at the Army captain from under a pair of tufted eyebrows.

Wallace told himself to remain calm—excited, he had a habit of stammering—and restrained an impulse to reach for his Colt. He'd just remembered he hadn't worn the Colt on his ride of the afternoon, and that his Spencer rested in the saddle boot, on his

HOSTILE INDIANS AND EVIL WHITE RENEGADES!

horse outside.

"I'm not—not worried over Alton," said Captain Wallace, hating himself for stammering.

AS Wallace spoke his eyes were fixed upon the five-pointed silver sheriff's star pinned to the turkey-red shirt.

"Then I reckon you better hobble yore zeal, Captain," said the pink-bearded sheriff. "It's my job to enforce law in Sturhan City—and protect folks against Injun killers who leave the reservation."

"Mountain Rider is hardly a killer," said Wallace. "But if—but if he were, I wouldn't blame him after the short—short rations and rotten meat your boss Alton has been selling to the Arrapahoes."

"Aw, you better let Hob handle the Injuns," said the sheriff, keeping his bulk in front of the Captain. "He knows how. Or are you lookin' to kick up a muss?"

"Hardly," said Wallace stiffly. He throttled down a yearning to plant a fist deep in the man's bulging paunch. "Since you seem to —"

A revolver spoke sharply from behind the closed office door, was followed by a lighter crack of a derringer.

There was no rush toward the rear of the building. Drinkers, gamblers and cowboys paid no attention. Sheriff "Red" Whelan showed his lack of concern by turning away and tossing down a drink of whisky at the bar.

"Here's some work for you, Red!"

The words were spoken by a man who had flung open the office door in back, the door behind which Mountain Rider had disappeared and behind which the shots had sounded. This man was not as tall nor as heavy as Sheriff Whelan, but his presence dominated the long room. Clean-shaven, dressed fussily in costly gray broadcloth and brocaded waistcoat, handsome, big-featured Horace "Hod" Alton, boss of Sturhan, was a striking figure.

"Something wrong, boss?" Sheriff Whelan asked innocently—too innocently. He wended his way slowly to where the saloon owner stood fingering the ruffle at his throat. Captain Wallace followed Sheriff Whelan closely, dreading what he was going to see in the back room office.

It was what he had feared—the lifeless body of Mountain Rider, only nephew of Chief Cloud Rider. He had been shot through the heart.

"That loco redskin pulled a derringer on me," explained Alton. "He didn't like the kind of meat I was sellin' the 'Rapahoes, so I give him a taste of hot lead instead."

Smiling coldly, "Hod" Alton paused while the men in the saloon guffawed loudly. When the laughter had died down, he continued his story.

"But he almost got me when he suddenly yanked out his derringer and fired," said Alton. "Of course I had to cut him down then, in self defense. But I sure hated to do it. Better bury him right away, boys. It ain't good for business to have corpses litterin' up the place. The drinks is on the house when you get him planted."

"There!" bawled Sheriff Whelan. "You heered Hob. That proves it was an even break. Step up, gents! Who's volunteerin' to help dig the grave?"

"Hold on!" Captain Wallace suddenly thrust himself through the crowd. He was as cool as ice now, and no longer stammered. "You say he opened up with a derringer and you then used a Colt to kill him. Is that the story?"

"That's correct, Captain," said Alton with barely concealed contempt.

Wallace gave him a cold, hard stare. "If that's true why did we hear the sound of your Colt before the derringer went off?"

"Red" Whelan scowled and planted his bulk in front of Wallace.

"What are you drivin' at, soldier?" he demanded.

"Just this," said Wallace mildly. "If Mountain Rider carried a derringer, he didn't fire first, and he certainly wasn't packing a Colt when I saw him."

Whelan continued to smile, though his eyes spelled murder. "That quinine you-all been takin' sure must have addled yore brains," he told Wallace. "The boss told a straight story."

He turned to the crowd. "Did any of you think the shots sounded the way the Captain says they did?"

There was a mumble of dissent. Wallace stared at man after man with level, accusing eyes, but no one would meet his glance. Several teamsters shook their heads. One ruffian swore loudly.

Realizing his efforts to extract the truth from these men were hopeless, Wallace gave up the attempt in disgust, strode out of the saloon, mounted his horse and started back for the fort.

Short as his stay at the Army post had been, he had already discovered that Hod Alton and Red Whelan were absolute rulers of Sturhan City. Already he had seen plenty of robbery, murder and violence in this little Western town. Mountain Rider was the only Indian who had died there. But this cold-blooded murder differed from the others in one respect.

Mountain Rider was the favorite nephew of a powerful Indian chief. Captain Wallace shuddered at the thought of what might be the result of it. Yet as an Army post commandant he was powerless to control the wild and reckless inhabitants of Sturhan City. He held no civil power. Ostensibly his duties were to protect the whites from the Indians, not the Indians from the whites. He frowned with anger at the thought.

TIGHT lipped and silent, he urged his horse into a brisk gallop and started across the hot, dusty plain in the direction of the fort. On the trail he passed a dozen wagons, heading for the town from the northeast.

Again Wallace's eyes flashed as he noted the Alton markings on the sides of the big canvas topped wagons, for he was remembering the innumerable outrages the owner of those wagons had committed.

Captain Wallace was still frowning when he reached the fort.

Fort Sturhan consisted of a barracks, stables, various frame buildings, officers quarters, a watch tower, a water tank, a flag pole, and a parade ground, all enclosed by a rectangular palisade. Through chinks in the pilings peeped the muzzles of several brass cannon.

But as he passed through the gates of the fort, his frown faded and gave way to a look of surprise.

Grouped near the entrance was a bunch of shaggy, restless ponies, with feather decked manes and tails under the care of four half naked Arapahoes from the reservation.

The Captain dismounted.

An orderly approached him and saluted smartly.

"Captain Wallace, sir," the orderly said. "Chief Cloud Rider is here. He is waiting in the Captain's quarters, sir. He said he had the Captain's permission to go there."

"It's all right, Wellman," said Wallace. "He has the run of the fort. I'll see the chief at once."

With heavy heart, the Captain walked up the steps of his cottage on Officers' Row. He would have to tell the Arrapahoe chief about the murder of his nephew.

It wasn't going to be easy.

CHAPTER II

Renegade's Checkmate

A TALL, muscular red man, dressed in fringed and beaded buckskin, was seated on the side of the square wooden bed, in the little room at the back of the house. His hair was long, coal black and lustrous, and his dark eyes were bright and intelligent. This was Chief Cloud Rider, who had been known to Wallace and others as "Jim," when they had attended Dartmouth College together, before the Civil War.

Smiling faintly as Wallace entered the room, the Chief returned the Captain's firm grip as the two men shook hands. From the expression upon Jim Cloud Rider's calm face no one would have suspected that members of his tribe had been reduced to desperate straits. This state of affairs had been brought about by Cloud Rider's loyalty to the United States.

During the Civil War the Arrapahoes had wanted to go on the warpath and it had been the influence of Chief Cloud Rider which had kept fully half the tribe at home and at peace.

The Chief's policy had resulted in a tribal split. When the rebellious members of the Arrapahoes had been defeated, they had cherished a grudge against those who had remained at home, and this enmity now was so bitter that the reservation had been divided up. The hostile members of the tribe had managed to keep the buffalo away from all parts of the reservation but their own section, depriving the loyal ones of meat upon which their existence depended.

A grateful Government had arranged to have an agent supply them with meat. Hod Alton had managed to get himself appointed as the contractor—by liberal use of money which he had obtained by swindling Kansas homesteaders, several years before. Needless to say he had cheated on his contract. Now he occupied a position of undisputed power in Sturhan City. Because of Alton's influence with certain politicians, the Army had hitherto been powerless to touch him.

Recently, however, a drunken employee of Alton had talked too freely to a trooper in town, over a bottle of whisky, and Wallace had taken steps to gather further evidence. Confirmation of these things should be arriving at any moment from the wagon train he had seen en route to Sturhan City. Through such evidence Wallace hoped to bring about the downfall of Hod Alton. Mountain Rider's death had been all the more tragic because, had the young Indian waited just a few hours longer, it would not have been necessary for him to protest about the rotten meat. Hod Alton already would have been disgraced and suspended as Indian agent.

All of these things passed through the Captain's mind as he shook hands with Jim Cloud Rider. Then Wallace took the time to swallow another quinine pill—for his malaria always bothered him when the weather was hot—and braced himself mentally. As gently as possible he broke the news of Mountain Rider's death to the Chief. The fact they had once been classmates at the old Indian college did not make the task any easier. The Captain gave a concise account of what had happened.

"It was murder, Jim," Wallace concluded. "It was as dirty and foul a killing as I ever heard of. Later, even if I had had a weapon, I couldn't have arrested Alton. Sheriff Whelan would have blocked me, for I had no

authority."

"I'm sorry, Bill," said the Indian Chief. "I'm sorry for my nephew and his widow and children, and for you, my friend, who had to stand by, helpless, while such a thing was being done."

Reaching out, Wallace grasped the Indian by the shoulder.

"Jim," he said, "I'd give anything I own for a chance to punish that murderer. There were no witnesses to the actual shooting and, even if there had been, not a resident of Sturhan City has courage enough to stand up against Alton and Whelan."

"You forget I've studied law—white man's law," said Jim Cloud Rider. "Coyotes quail before the lean, cruel, gray prairie wolf." There was irony in the Indian Chief's voice.

The Captain looked puzzled. "You're talking riddles again, Jim."

"Hod Alton is evil but he is not a fool," answered the Chief. "The hunter treads gently when he seeks the rattlesnake among the rocks. You will never get him, Jim, unless you use craft."

Wallace had been rinsing the dust off his face as the two men had been talking. Now he began to dry himself with a towel. Jim Cloud Rider's voice had been as emotionless as if he had been discussing a triviality of tribal law, but Wallace got his meaning at once.

"Oh, don't misunderstand me, Jim," he said. "I haven't been exactly idle. I've got a secret agent with that wagon train of Alton's." He tossed aside the towel. "If Alton has been shipping what I think he has in them, we've got him right where we want him. He'll go to prison."

"I hope Alton goes to prison soon," said Jim Cloud Rider, quietly. "I cannot hold my people in check much longer. Starvation is making them desperate."

Before Captain Wallace had time to answer gunshots cracked outside of the fort palisade. Both men stiffened to attention. Since they were in the house, Wallace was not sure from what direction they had come. But Chief Cloud Rider was not in doubt.

"Those shots came from the direction of town," he said.

"Let's go to the front porch," said Wallace tossing away the towel. "We'll find out what's up."

WHEN they reached the front of the house, Wallace saw there was some kind of excitement around the gates of the fort. Troopers were running in that direction. Followed by the Indian, he hurried toward the entrance where the sentry had dropped his carbine to a position of readiness and was gazing at something of interest outside the palisade. Wallace began to run. The sound of galloping horses came to his ears.

As he reached the gates of the fort an excited and lathered horse came plunging through the entrance and an additional half dozen shots rang out, close at hand.

Upon the back of the horse was a man, clad in buckskin. Evidently he was badly hurt, for he was bent low over the neck and swaying from side to side. As Wallace reached for the bridle, the horse swerved away and the man fell heavily to the ground, where he rolled over and lay still.

Wallace knelt down by his side and lifted his head. Already the Captain had recognized him.

"Ty!" he cried. "What have they done to you?" The face of the wounded man was pale and blood streaked. His eyes rolled upwards. It was plain he was dying. "Quick! Tell me what happened."

Ty's eyes came down for an instant and focused their gaze upon Wallace's face.

"They tricked me, Bill," he gasped out in a whisper. "But you were right—about the wagons. Go—after—them."

Bloody froth welled out over his lips and there was a faint rattling sound in his throat. Then a spasm shook his body and he was dead. Wallace ripped open his buckskin shirt. Ty had been shot twice—from the back.

Slowly Wallace lowered the dead man to the ground, stood up and motioned for a couple of soldiers to carry him away. As the soldiers departed with the body, he became aware that several horsemen had halted near the gate, just outside the confines of the fort. Wallace's gaze settled upon the savage, exultant face of Sheriff Red Whelan, who had reined up his champing horse. Behind the sheriff, were several of his cronies, men who were fully as brutal.

"That friend of yore'n won't be so gabby after this," Whelan called out, showing a set of yellow fangs. He didn't wait for a reply. Turning to his friends, he waved his arm. "Come on, boys!" The horsemen galloped back toward town, leaving a trail of dust behind them.

Captain Wallace stood in the gateway, looking after Whelan. The dead man was Lieutenant Tyler Brent, United States Cavalry, who had volunteered to ride with Alton's train and, incidentally, pick up certain information. Again Wallace felt responsible for a murder.

It was time to act. Wallace had his evidence now. Swiftly he went back into the fort, a fierce joy of combat in his heart. He was through playing the bystander. A few minutes later, fully armed, he mounted his pony at the head of a dozen troopers.

"Good luck, my friend," said the Chief. "And tread carefully."

"The time for care is past, Jim," said Wallace. He waved, gave his men the order to advance, led them toward Sturhan City.

The single street of Sturhan City looked oddly empty for an evening after a large wagon train had hit town. Few horses were

standing at the hitch rails. The Double Eagle, viewed through the bright yellow rectangle of its front window, looked almost deserted, even for a week night.

Of the wagon train there was now no sign. If Wallace had needed more than Ty Brent's word that the wagons held contraband, this was it. Armed with guns, the still restless Arrapahoe rebels might go on the war path and slay settlers and their families, to say nothing of U. S. soldiers.

He rode slowly back along the street, hoping against hope to find he was wrong. As he repassed the Double Eagle, Hod Alton came out on the steps, wearing a blandly sardonic smile on his ruddy, handsome face.

"Huntin' for something, Captain?" he said, almost dreamily. "You look plumb hot. Better bring yore men inside and let 'em wet their whistles. The drinks'll be on me, of course."

"I'm hot all right," said Wallace, reining to a halt and stopping his men behind him. "What's more, I'm getting hotter by the second. Where is that wagon train of yours I saw heading for town a while ago?"

"I reckon they must have pulled out right quick," said the outwardly amiable Sturhan City boss. "Seems like they had a little trouble. Seems like they shot one of their own wagoners just out of town. Seems like he was tryin' to rob a wagon and one of the drivers caught him."

"He was—was an officer in the United States Cav — Cavalry," said Wallace, stammering again. "He was shot—was shot in the back—twice. He was coming here to—for regular duty at the post."

"Now that's a dang funny way for an Army officer to act—ridin' with wagoners and stealin'," said Alton, chuckling. He was making no effort to hide his contempt for the little officer.

IF ALTON'S purpose was to anger the Captain, he succeeded. Wallace swore.

"Blast—blast it, he wasn't stealing—He was after information," said the Captain. "Just let me get angry enough," he told himself, "to get over this stammer." He had no trouble with his speech when he was fighting mad.

"All of which proves spyin' around can be mighty dangerous, too," drawled Alton. He shrugged. "At any rate it wasn't healthy for him, Captain." He winked at one of the little crowd of supporters who had gathered behind him in the door of the saloon. Somebody sniggered.

"Where is that wagon train?" snapped Wallace. He wasn't stammering now. "Before he died, Lieutenant Brent gave me certain information. You are running guns to the lower Arrapahoes, Alton. For the first time since you came to Sturhan City, you've overstepped yourself."

"Shucks, now!" said Alton, pursing his heavy lips in a heavy effort at comedy. "I sure hope not. Oh, yes, that wagon train! I plumb forgot what we were talking about. Even if it belonged to me, which I wouldn't dream of admitting anything, I'd leave it alone if I was you, Captain." His voice was no longer mocking, had grown hard and menacing. "Remember, you haven't no proof. Just a dyin' man's loco ravin's." He rocked on his heels, smiled again.

"You know by now that we don't cotton to promiscuous shootin's here in Sturhan City, Captain. No sir!" He shook his head, spat a stream of tobacco juice so aimed as to make the Captain's pony fidget. But Wallace, an expert horseman, held his seat easily, waited for Alton to finish.

"So when them fellers started smokin' it up outside, Sheriff Whelan's deputy ordered them to keep right on driftin' to wherever they was headin' for. Meanwhile, Sheriff Whelan was investigatin'—yep, that's the word I'm tryin' to hog-tie—the tragic death of yore officer friend."

Captain Wallace said nothing. This time he had to take it.

"Sheriff Whelan is sure a conscientious peace officer," the saloon owner went on. "He did his duty and went prancin' out with a posse to trail down the wagons and get the facts of the shootin' dead to rights. He should have caught up with them by now. In my opinion, he's handlin' the situation final and complete." He paused, basking in the murmur of approval that rose from his followers.

Wallace had taken all he could stand. With a sharp command, he led his dozen men off into the night at a sharp trot. Back at the fort, Chief Cloud Rider was still awaiting his return. Wallace pulled no punches when he told the story. Grimly, he admitted that he had failed.

"So my hands are tied," he concluded. "I'd have to get a Federal warrant to search those wagons now, and that would take weeks."

"Bill," said the red man gravely, "we must get those guns before our enemies. Many innocents will die otherwise."

"As if I didn't know it," said the captain, ramming a fist of frustration into the palm of his other hand. "How do you propose to do this?"

"There is a way," said Cloud Rider, a gleam in his black eyes. "Remember, I have studied the laws of the white man."

"Tell me," said Captain Wallace, sitting bolt upright.

"If," said the chief, "my people were to go on the warpath first, you. . . ."

And Cloud Rider revealed his plan—a dangerous scheme that sent a chill through Wallace. But there seemed no other way out of the situation. So much depended on stopping the delivery of the guns that great chances had to be taken. Even the laws that Captain Wallace upheld must be circumvented.

CHAPTER III

Smuggled Guns

LESS than fifteen minutes later, Chief Cloud Rider, at the head of his escort, vanished into the darkness at a gallop. Back in the fort, sleepy soldiers were routed out of bed by the bugler. They fell in with much grumbling and cursing, rubbing the early sleep from their eyes.

Within the hour, thirty troopers headed by Captain Wallace galloped through Sturhan City's sole street and pulled up in front of the Double Eagle. Frowning, the captain dismounted and entered the saloon alone. He was doing a lot of praying as he strode confidently to the bar.

Hod Alton, feet wide apart, was standing with his back to the bar. He greeted the officer with quickly covered surprise, then took his thumbs from the pockets of his waistcoat.

"What's up, Captain?" he asked. "Did you run out of pills?"

"This isn't funny," said Wallace sternly. "You started—you started something this afternoon when you shot Mountain Rider, Alton." Memory of the brutal killing made his anger foam over inside, caused him to forget his stammer. Alton lifted a derisive eyebrow.

"What was I supposed to do—let him shoot me?" he asked.

"There was no call for shooting—it was murder. You and I know it. Unfortunately, so do the Arrapahoes. They've gone on the warpath."

"This is sort of sudden, isn't it?" said Alton. His eyes narrowed, and he bent his head to admire the flashing gleam of the diamond ring he was wearing. "What are you aimin' to do about it, Captain?"

"My best to protect this community and its citizens under my care," said Wallace. He looked and felt absurdly small in that long room full of big men. But the anger in him was flaming high. "I hereby declare Sturhan City under martial law until the uprising is put down."

"Sounds right soldierly," said Alton. He blew on the diamond, then buffed it on a broadcloth sleeve. "When are you expectin' this here attack to come?"

"Before morning, from what my scouts tell me," said Wallace.

"Shucks, now!" said Alton, feigning panic. "What are they goin' to use to shoot us with—bows and arrows, spears or slingshots?" He waited for his supporters to laugh, but Wallace gave them no chance.

"Enjoy yourself, Alton," said the Captain. He was at the point where his bluff lived or died, but he didn't hesitate. "You sent a dozen wagons west tonight. That's what the Arrapahoes are after."

"They don't dare!" said Alton, but his ruddy face went white. "That bunch of broken-down old bucks hasn't gone on the warpath in ten years."

"Hunger can drive men to many things," said Wallace drily. His friend, Jim Cloud Rider had been right. The scheme was going to work. "Don't lose any sleep, Alton. My men will see that your precious wagon train comes to no bad end. That's what we are here for."

His lips were tight, but there was new brightness in his eyes as he went to the bar, demanded a glass of water and used it to chase a pill down his throat. He walked out of the Double Eagle, leaving a stunned silence behind him. The last thing Hod Alton wanted was for the Army to get its hands on the guns and bullets he was selling the rebel tribe. That was why he had rushed the contraband out of town so hurriedly.

As Captain Wallace led his troop westward along the dusty main street, the topography of the ground ahead was before him like a map. Not for nothing had he ridden the plains every afternoon when his duties as post commander permitted. He knew the ground as well as any trapper in the district.

The only way the wagons could reach the territory of the renegade Arrapahoes lay along the winding path of a long-dried-up old river bed. The open country itself was far too broken with rock outcroppings and sudden arroyos to make a practicable night wagon trail. But mounted men were not so hindered. They could cut straight across the prairie.

But the caravan, its leaders evidently fearing pursuit, had made good time despite tired men and horses. It was after midnight when Wallace and his men flushed them. Actually, the soldiers all but stumbled over them in the dark. The six-horse wagons were without lanterns.

"Riders comin'!" shouted a caravan outrider as the soldiers cantered up to him. "Look sharp!" His raucous voice split the night like a saw blade. Then his pistol sparked the darkness, and a bullet zinged its way past Wallace's head.

"Hold your fire!" Wallace called back. "This is Captain Wallace. We're escorting you back to the fort. Arrapahoes on the warpath."

"Like a pig's ear you are," growled a deep voice, and the great bulk of Sheriff Whelan showed in murky silhouette against the deep blue sky as he emerged from the black mass of the caravan. "We're goin' on through."

"Hold it!" Wallace yelled. "Martial law has been declared. I'm giving the orders

until the Arrapahoes are back on their reservation."

"Who declared it?" the Sheriff asked, a sneer in his voice.

"I did," said Wallace.

IT WAS a tense moment. Then tension spilled over. Whelan swore obscenely and told the Captain where he could head in. Wallace smiled mirthlessly in the darkness, as the Sheriff rode back to the wagons train. There was going to be a fight. He hadn't felt this stir under his ribs since his outfit had walked into a Rebel ambush just north of Baton Rouge in a Mississippi River bayou. He reached for his revolver.

"That's enough, men," he told his troopers, who had fanned out behind him to cover the entire length of the train. "If they haven't the sense to surrender quietly, go in and take them—huuuup!"

A fusillade of shots from the wagons put deadly fireflies on the desert. The air sang with the high-pitched song of flying lead. Riding flat against their horses' necks, the troopers closed in without returning the fire. They were not to shoot until they could pick out individual targets. It was a maneuver they had practised scores of times.

Wallace himself was the first to see action. Suddenly, out of the night, an apparently berserk Sheriff Whelan came riding down on him at a full gallop, blazing away with a gun in either hand. At his heels galloped the outrider who had given the original alarm.

Somewhere in the depths of Wallace's repressed New England soul lay a love of battle that responded to the chant of lead. He drew his saber as a slug sent his hat flying thirty feet and another cut a crimson line across his cheekbone. Then, scornful of peril, he charged straight at the arrogant Sheriff, his blade whistling as he swung it round his head.

All the hatred that this cruel and corrupt lawman could inspire in his Yankee soul was hot within him as he delivered his first blow, standing in his stirrups for better leverage. Bullets were too good for such a cheap rascal, as was the edge of a tempered blade. He brought the weapon down in a mighty arc, smacking the Sheriff across the temple with the flat.

Whelan's twin revolvers flew from his hands to the ground as he toppled from the saddle, unconscious. With a clear line of fire, the outrider began blasting at Wallace, but his aim was poor, and another blow from the flat of the captain's saber sent him flying through the air.

The battle, if such a skirmish deserves the name, was soon over. The wagon guards, with Whelan eliminated so quickly, were no match for the disciplined troopers. The shooting ended quickly as the soldiers closed in on the wagons. Guards and drivers were rounded up. One trooper had a forearm wound and three wagoners had absorbed lead internally.

"Disarm them, and let them walk back to town," said Wallace, surveying the unkempt human collection from his steed. "Whelan and his pal, on the ground over there, are the only two I want."

While this was being done, a quartet of troopers went to work on one of the wagons, which, like its mates, was packed tightly with wooden crates. In a matter of minutes, two such crates had been ripped open on the ground. One was full of new Sharps carbines, packed in grease, the other with carton after carton of ammunition. Ty Brent had been right.

Wallace had been as sure of his ground before as a man could be without proof. But now he had concrete evidence of illegal dealing by Hod Alton—enough to send the man to prison despite his upper-bracket protection—and a wave of fierce exultation swept through the Army officer. He had won.

"You'll hear from this," snarled a revived Red Whelan. "The boss won't stand for it. He has plenty of pull back in Washington."

"I always supposed you were a man who did his own fighting, without hiding behind a boss' skirts," said Wallace. "Bring him along, men."

Whelan said nothing as he was tied up and hoisted into a wagon, but by the light of a lantern his stubbled face was twisted with rage. Wallace, the little soldier he despised, had swordwhipped him like a baby. His eyes gleamed almost insanely in the flickering light.

But the Captain was not concerned with the murderous feelings of his foe. Twelve of his thirty troopers had to serve as drivers, four of the remainder as lead men for the spare horses. This left only fourteen men to serve as a mobile guard to ride herd on the train.

Getting the wagons turned around there in the narrow river bottom took the better part of an hour. The tired horses showed no desire to cooperate with their new masters, and a lot of good Army cussing went to waste in the heedless night air of the plains.

Dawn was already bright in the east when the low, weathered shacks and houses and false-fronted buildings of Sturhan City showed sharp against the sky. Slowly, the wagon train came up out of the river bottom onto the flat ground that stretched placidly to the horizon.

THE town was ominously silent as they approached it. Wallace had expected activity. As he took another quinine pill and washed it down with warm water from his canteen, he wondered if Hod Alton were going to take defeat lying down. It hardly seemed likely.

"Sergeant Murphy." He summoned a griz-

zled trooper who wore triple yellow chevrons on his sleeves. "Ride on ahead with Private Barnes and scout out the town. Keep an eye out for ambushes."

Murphy saluted and wheeled to obey, picking up Barnes as he went past the head of the column. Wallace looked after the pair with a faint feeling of misgiving. Things were not going according to plan. Where was Cloud Rider? He frowned, vainly scouted the flat circle of the horizon.

Wallace's Indian classmate had promised to bring a large group of his braves out in force for a demonstration that would justify the captain's enactment of a martial law decree. The success of the whole scheme depended on this phony Indian attack for its legal justification.

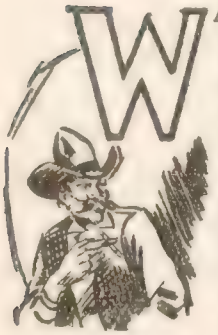
But no Indians were in sight. The Sergeant and Trooper Barnes disappeared among the buildings of the town, and still there were no signs of a disturbance. The rear of the train was within five hundred yards of the first rude building, its head a scant two hundred yards away before a feather showed.

Then Indians seemed to rise up out of the plain itself. From every shallow dip and gulley they leaped, galloping their steeds and whooping it up as only redmen can. Wallace smiled as they charged in on the train from three directions, firing their guns. They were putting on a grand show. Trust old Jim not to let him down.

Then the Captain cursed as his horse bucked, lifting his rump high and kicking out with both rear feet. Looking back, Wallace saw a streak of crimson across the beast's rear flank. Not until the blood began to flow did he realize what it meant. The bullets these Indians were firing were real!

CHAPTER IV

Alton's Ambush



WALLACE'S first rapid-fire reaction to the treacherous attack was that his classmate had betrayed him—his second a wild consuming rage. Then he saw that the paint worn by the red men was unfamiliar. They were the men of Flying Hawk, the rebellious Arrapahoes for whom the guns and ammunition of the wagon train had been originally intended.

"Form a circle!" Wallace ordered his men. "Don't let them get the wagons!"

It was a costly and almost impossible job. So fiercely did the red men press their attack that twice, while the wagon-redoubt was being formed under fire, Wallace and the mobile troopers had to drive small groups of them out of its interior.

"Here they come again!" shouted a soldier after the second such foray was repulsed.

"Give them one volley, then draw sabres and charge," said the Captain. "Fire!"

Five Indians went down. Then, headed by their slim, sallow-faced commander, the little troop launched itself on the attackers, who met them head-on. Both sides were whooping it up.

The impact, as horse met horse, was terrific. For seconds, there was a crushing, slashing, grinding melee. But after Wallace had sliced the right arm neatly from the shoulder of an Arrapahoe with a blow whose force seemed impossible from one of his small size, the enemy broke. Wallace and his troop retreated in good order to the circle.

The Captain was breathing a little fast, as he surveyed the situation and placed his men to best advantage. Suddenly he remembered Red Whelan.

The wagon which had contained the sheriff was empty. A rent in the side told the story. By means of a hidden knife, the sheriff had made good his escape.

"But not for long, Red," said Wallace softly, and there was grim purpose in his eyes and manner. Then the Captain turned back to the more pressing needs of the battle surging around him.

One trooper had already been killed by a bullet through the head. Three others were wounded. Walking slowly to the center of the crude circle, the Captain paid no heed to the bullets that whined past his head at irregular intervals, kept a weather eye on the town.

Hod Alton and his myrmidons were keeping out of sight. Safely ensconced behind the walls of the houses of Sturhan City, they also constituted a threatening obstacle between the soldiers and the fort.,

Wallace made a quick, cool, expert survey of the situation. With twenty-six able-bodied men, he was in a crack. According to his rough estimate, at least three hundred red men were attacking them. And Alton had at least forty or more trained gunmen in the town itself.

The Indians attacked again, but their fire was not heavy. The Captain sighted a brave who was crowding his luck a little too closely and sighted along the short barrel of his carbine, and fired, dropping him off the back of the pony—dead.

Fire from the troopers increased, and the attacking Indians began going down in clusters of five, six or seven.

Realizing that they were taking a licking, the rebel Arrapahoes poured a fusillade into the horses gathered in the center of the impromptu redoubt. Animal after animal was killed, screaming and threshing as lead tore

through his hide. The huddled beasts made easy targets.

"We need help from the fort," remarked powder-stained Sergeant Murphy, stooping to strip a dead trooper of his cartouches.

"They'll be along soon," answered Wallace, feigning an optimism he did not feel. The expected reinforcements from the Fort Sturhan garrison was nowhere in sight—nor were the friendly Arrapahoes of Cloud Rider who had been supposed to stage this attack. Alton had pulled a fifth ace out of his sleeve.

Three more soldiers had fallen, and Wallace's lips tightened. Something had to be done or the red men would wipe out the entire company. The odds were too great for successful extended action. The Captain thought of the arms in the wagons and shook his head.

"Fire the wagons," he said calmly. Even if the redskins were beaten off, the guns must not fall into the hands of Alton. Their destruction was the only safe course.

Dried out by the long, dusty trip across the plains, the wagons caught like tinder. In a matter of minutes, the whole train was ablaze, save for a small outlet toward the town. Through this narrow gate, Captain Wallace led his men at a gallop, firing as they rode.

SHRILL screams of rage rose from the red men when they saw their promised arms going up in flames. Recklessly, they assailed the little knot of men in blue, unleashing a withering fire. Trooper after trooper went down as they raced their frightened horses toward Sturhan City.

When they were within fifty yards of the houses, flame and smoke spurted from the windows, and lead began to pour into them from a new quarter. Wallace felt a mallet blow smash his left shoulder, and the reins slipped from nerveless fingers. He hadn't thought Alton would openly attack United States troops—but he had been wrong.

There was only one thing left to do—try to take the town and turn it into a fort. It was a terrible gauntlet to run, between Alton's well-covered cohorts and the renegade Arrapahoes. But no other course remained. Wallace, sickened by his wound, clung to the neck of his racing pony.

The trooper at his left shrieked and toppled from his saddle, was dragged fifty feet before his boot was shaken clear of the stirrup. Then Wallace felt his own mount stagger as a bullet thudded into its flank. His Spencer flew from his right hand as he tossed himself clear of the falling beast, managed to land, staggering, on his feet.

He dropped to one knee, drew his revolver, grimly set to fight it out to the end. At any rate, he had kept those guns from hostile Indian hands. He picked a target, aimed carefully, then let his six shooter drop as the brave he had selected veered and fled at a wild gallop.

Then Wallace saw Cloud Rider's friendly braves! They came sweeping up in a body, alongside the other thirty troopers from the Fort Sturhan garrison. Indian and trooper alike were pouring a deadly hail of lead into the fleeing enemy. The battle swept quickly past Wallace to the west.

Wallace stood up, swayed slightly as he watched the enemy driven off. A twinge of pain in his wounded shoulder made him flinch, but he mastered his weakness as he realized the job that still lay ahead. Grim, bloody, dirty, he moved slowly but steadily toward the town.

No shots greeted his approach. Alton's men were no longer so anxious to stir up trouble with the Government. The Captain smiled mirthlessly as he trod the churned dirt of Sturhan City's single street.

No townsmen were in sight. They were staying indoors. Pale and stern, Wallace moved on. It was time for a showdown. Neither he nor Alton could afford to let the other live. Both had broken virtually every law in the statutes during the last eighteen hours. The Captain plodded toward the Double Eagle, sensing the whispers behind him.

Alton was waiting for him, leaning against a pillar of the saloon porch, twiddling the heavy gold watch chain across his flowered waistcoat. The town boss smiled faintly as he saw Wallace approaching. He did not go for his guns.

Something in his attitude warned Wallace —something just a little too cocksure, a little too relaxed. He studied Alton warily as he drew close, suspecting an ambush.

A hidden marksman could be hidden on one of the roofs, or behind any of scores of windows. Somewhere, a bullet was waiting for Wallace. Barber shop? No, he could see inside too clearly. The saloon itself? Hardly, it was too obvious. The post office?

"See you got winged, Wallace," said Alton, in polite tones. He shook his head regretfully. But there was a deadly tension in the air.

The post office—that had to be it. Old Man Thompson would never permit a killer to use his general store for cover—and he was the sort of salty character that simply refused to be murdered. Wallace pivoted quickly on his toes, drawing on last reserves of energy.

It was there. At one side of the big post office window, he saw the glint of the rising sun on a gun barrel, saw the darker bulk of the gunman behind it, the gleam of a silver star on a red-shirted torso. Wallace fired from the hip, just before that other gun spouted flame at him.

Jerkily, like a marionette, Red Whelan dropped his long rifle and toppled out into the street. He lay still in the horse-fouled dirt. With the carroty red of his whiskers

and the turkey red of his shirt, a darker shade mingled as it flowed. Red Whelan was dead.

Some slight movement behind him made Wallace spin around again. He ducked, flinching, as Alton's derringer roared almost in his face. He even heard the bullet whine past his cheek. Then his own heavy pistol boomed twice, sending two spurts of dust from Alton's waistcoat, adding crimson flowers to that flowered brocade.

"I—ah—" said the boss of Sturhan City. He stared for a moment at Wallace in disbelief, then shuddered mightily. "I'll be a—" he muttered and slid down the porch pillar to sit on the boards, his eyes staring vacantly at the street. Hod Alton was as dead as his sheriff.

WALLACE backed against a wall as Alton's renegades formed a slow half circle around him. His shoulder was hurting like blazes now, and he wanted to lie down. He gave himself about fifteen seconds to live, wondered how many of the three bullets remaining in his gun he'd have time to fire.

The street began to tilt as if it ran uphill. But there were no hills in this desolated country. He heard the pounding of hoofs from somewhere, saw dimly the half circle melt away like mud in the rain. Then he was being held up, saw Jim's copper face grinning at him from under its hideous war paint.

"Listen, you old son of a gun," Wallace said. He was light-headed now, weak with his wound and relief. "Where did your tribe get the guns?"

"Would you live among mountain lions without a bow?" said the Chief. "I hope you aren't going to report it. They'll only be used—the right way."

"You're a good—a good man, Jim," said Wallace. "You have a right to them if anybody—if anybody does. Get me—get me some water, will you? I don't feel so good."

His eyes closed, and his head fell forward on his chest.

Chief Cloud Rider looked down at him affectionately, then carried the little man like a baby into the saloon.

Johnny Thor rides to rescue his partner from a gun-ringed outlaw ranch where the only exit is via a coffin—in

A TEXAN RIDES MONTANA

By GUNNISON STEELE

AN EXCITING COMPLETE NOVELET COMING NEXT ISSUE!

•

STATEMENT OF THE OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, CIRCULATION, ETC., REQUIRED BY THE ACTS OF CONGRESS OF AUGUST 24, 1912, AND MARCH 3, 1933, of Popular Western, published bi-monthly at New York, N. Y., for October 1, 1945. State of New York, County of New York, ss. Before me, a Notary Public in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared H. L. Herbert, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the Business Manager of Popular Western, and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, as amended by the Act of March 3, 1933, embodied in section 537, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to wit: 1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are: Publisher, Better Publications, Inc., 10 East 40th St., New York, N. Y.; Editor, G. B. Farnum, 10 East 40th Street, New York, N. Y.; Managing Editor, None; Business Manager, H. L. Herbert, 10 East 40th Street, New York, N. Y. 2. That the owner is: Better Publications, Inc., 10 East 40th Street, New York, N. Y. N. L. Pines, 10 East 40th Street, New York, N. Y. 3. That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 per cent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are none. 4. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders, and security holders, if any, contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting, is given; also that the said two paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner; and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest direct or indirect in the said stock, bonds, or other securities than as so stated by him. H. L. Herbert, Business Manager. Sworn to and subscribed before me this 1st day of October, 1945. Eugene Wechsler, Notary Public. My commission expires March 30, 1946.

Barton lashed out and caught Ware on the chin

BARREL OF TROUBLE

By CHARLES ALAN GREGORY

Accused of robbery and besieged in a cave, then held by the law, Barton must choose between jail or Boot Hill!

THE roaring of the guns was loud. To anyone but Dan Barton the situation would have seemed hopeless, but there was something hard—rock-like about his nature. Even if there were at least ten men firing at him from the cliff across the canyon he took it calmly.

"Don't figger there's more than one or two salty hombres in Pecos Ware's whole bunch," Barton muttered, edging along the wall of the cave which sheltered him. "Most of them are just half-breeds and bad Indians."

He reached the entrance to the cave. Thick rock and dirt protected him as he raised his long barreled Colt and fired. Across the canyon one of the men uttered a wild cry and flung up his arms as a bullet hit him. He dropped flat and lay still.

"Got one of them," Barton said dispassionately.

He moved back, flattening himself against the wall at the side of the entrance. A volley of gunfire came from Pecos Ware's men. Some of them were using rifles, though the range was close enough for six-guns. Bullets whined in through the mouth of the cave. They thudded into the dirt walls, but Dan Barton was safe as long as he remained where he was now.

They had been close on his heels when he

had found the cave. Pecos Ware and his wolf pack, Barton thought as he stood listening to lead hitting dirt and rock. Outlaws and killers hot on the trail of a man who was wanted by the law. It struck him as ironical, and yet he knew what they really were after. It was the ten thousand dollars he carried in the money belt strapped around his waist beneath his flannel shirt.

"Go on," he muttered. "Waste all the ammunition yuh want. It don't bother me none."

The roaring of the guns ceased. Barton didn't like the silence. It might mean Ware was changing his plan of attack. The outlaw leader had brains. If it were humanly possible he would find a way to trap the man he wanted.

Barton peered back into the cave. The sunlight gleaming in through the front opening did not go far. Further back, the light merged into blackness. There had been no chance for Barton to explore the rear of the cave. The bullets, flying in through the entrance cut him off and made that too dangerous, so he had to cling to the side walls near the mouth of the cave.

"Shore wish I knew if there is a back way into this place," he thought. "It's dark back there, and too many lead slugs buzzin' around to make it healthy for a feller to start lookin'."

He turned and edged along the side of the entrance so he could peer across the canyon. He scowled as he stared at the cliff on the other side. Pecos Ware and his men had disappeared. There was nothing in sight but the dead man sprawled on the lip of the ledge.

"I've been huntin' for you, friend."

A QUIET voice behind Barton had spoken.

Barton whirled, gun ready, then stood motionless, gazing blankly at the lean gray haired man who had him covered with a Colt.

"Sheriff Jed Lang," Barton said in dazed tones. "How did you get here?"

"Heard shootin' up this way and decided to take a look-see," the sheriff said. "Looked like those gents across the canyon were keepin' you right busy so I nosed around, found a back way into the cave and here I am." He motioned with his six-shooter. "Put away yore gun. Do it easy like."

"Then there is a back way into the cave," Barton dropped his gun into the holster. "I've been wonderin' about that. Didn't have much chance to find out though."

The old lawman stared at Barton. Lang evidently was puzzled about something. Finally he frowned and shook his head.

"It just don't seem right," the sheriff said. "Knew you were a hard man, Barton, but I never figgered yuh'd go in for bank robbin' and killin'."

"Killin'?" Barton demanded. "What do you mean, Sheriff?"

"That teller yuh shot when yuh held up the Mesa Bank died this mornin'," Lang said. "Folks feel right resentful about that. He didn't try to stop yuh when yuh got the ten thousand. There was no reason for yuh to plug him."

"Yuh're shore I robbed that bank?" Barton asked.

"Don't seem to be much doubt of it," Sheriff Lang said. "Yesterday noon you were seen comin' out of the bank just after the holdup with a gun in one hand and a money bag in the other. You weren't even masked. I saw yuh myself. But you were too far down the street from my office for me to stop you. Yuh shore got yore hoss and cut out of town fast."

Barton didn't say anything. He was wondering about Pecos Ware and his men. If the sheriff had found the rear entrance to the cave, the outlaws might also come in that way. Barton felt that Ware's men were far more dangerous than was Jed Lang.

"Pecos Ware also saw me leave town," Barton said. "That's why he's after me now."

"Figgered so." The sheriff nodded. "But he ain't goin' to get you." His last remark had a final and determined ring.

"Hope yuh're right," Barton said with a smile. "He's got nine or ten men with him, and there are only two of us."

"You did all right when you were fightin' them alone," Lang answered. He looked at Barton, a long searching look and then thrust his gun into the holster. "Reckon you and me better declare a truce until we get out of here, Barton."

"Then what?" Barton asked.

"Why, then I'm arrestin' yuh and takin' yuh in for the bank robbery, and the killin'," the sheriff explained. "You agree to the truce?"

"Suits me," Dan Barton nodded. "But each man for himself when we get out of this."

Across the canyon a rifle roared and then another. At least some of Ware's men had returned to their positions on the opposite side of the gulch. Barton grabbed the sheriff and pulled him back to a place of safety. Bullets screamed past and thudded into the dirt walls.

"Thanks," Lang said dryly.

Barton drew his gun. He slid along the side of the cave entrance and peered out. Two men with rifles were stationed on the other cliff. Barton fired and his aim was good. A man sprawled lifeless, a bullet in his brain. Barton ducked back as the second man aimed his rifle and fired. The bullet missed him by inches.

The sheriff stepped boldly out into the entrance. His gun roared and the man who had just fired the rifle leaped to his feet, swayed and then went hurtling down over the edge of the cliff.

"Nice shootin', Sheriff," Barton said. "But where is Ware and the rest of his men?"

"Might be wise if we don't wait around to find out," said Lang. "Come on, Barton. Let's try to get out the back way."

The sheriff led the way toward the rear of the cave and Barton followed. It grew darker and darker as they left the sunlight at the entrance behind him. Barton found they were in a sort of tunnel. He could reach out and touch walls on either side.

"From here on we crawl," Lang said softly. "It's right narrow."

They crawled for what seemed a long distance to Barton before he saw light gleaming ahead. The rear entrance to the cave was close now. Sheriff Lang crawled out and Barton was close behind him. Brush and trees were thick around them as they stood up. Barton glanced back. The rear entrance to the cave was well hidden and not easy to find.

"You were smart, Sheriff," Barton said. "Finding that way into the cave like yuh did."

"It took a heap of lookin'," Lang said. "I—"

HE BROKE off with a curse. Like moving shadows men appeared all around them. They were heavily armed men of Pecos Ware's human wolf pack. Two renegade Indians, a couple of half-breeds, three hard faced gunslicks and Ware himself.

"We've been waitin' for you, Barton." Pecos Ware's voice was soft. He was short and stocky, and looked like a bull-frog dressed in fancy range clothes. "Finding the sheriff with you is an unexpected pleasure."

"Which pleasure is all yore's, Ware," the sheriff said. "Funny—there's been a lot of talk about you leadin' a pack of outlaws but this is the first time anyone has seen yuh with yore men."

"Sometimes a little knowledge is a dangerous thing, Sheriff." Ware brushed some dust off the sleeve of his bright yellow shirt. His clothing was expensive and natty. The black bullhide chaps he wore were fancy and his six-gun had a pearl handle. "As long as you were unable to prove anything about me naturally I did not bother about you. Now it is different."

Barton glanced about him. It had been a long hot summer with very little rain. The brush was tinder dry. Ware's men had gradually grouped themselves so they all faced Barton and the sheriff.

"You might as well hand over that money now, Barton," Ware said. "You won't need it any longer."

"Think I been fool enough to carry the money around in my pockets when I knew you were after me?" Barton answered. "I haven't got it now. You thought you were smart in the bank yesterday."

"Never mind." Ware stepped forward and quickly slapped Barton across the face with his open hand. "Shut up."

Despite the men around Ware, Barton wasn't taking anything like that from him. Barton lashed out with a hard right and caught Ware squarely on the chin. There was plenty of force behind the blow. It lifted Ware off his feet and he sat down hard.

"He's not goin' to like that, Barton," the sheriff said. "You've plumb ruined his disposition."

Lang was right. Ware was cursing and sputtering as he got awkwardly to his feet. He grabbed out his pearl handled gun and aimed it at Barton.

"If yuh shoot me you never will find the money," Barton said. "Right now my life is worth ten thousand dollars, Ware."

The outlaw leader realized Barton was right. Pecos lowered his gun, and Barton breathed a sigh of relief. That had been a little too close for comfort. In another moment Ware would have put a bullet in his heart.

"Tie their hands behind them," Ware told his men.

One of the Indians stepped forward. He produced some lengths of rawhide and quickly and tightly tied Barton and the sheriff's wrists behind their backs. Ware dropped his gun back into the holster.

"Take them to the hideout," Ware commanded. "Couple of you men search the cave and make shore Barton didn't hide the money in there. I got some business to 'tend to but I'll be at the hideout by evenin'."

He turned away and quickly disappeared in the brush. Two of the men headed for the cave. The rest led Barton and the sheriff

down a trail into the canyon. Here horses were waiting. The prisoners were boosted into the saddles of two of the horses. Two of the Indians drew Barton and Lang's guns out of the holsters and thrust the weapons into their own belts. Then they mounted and took the reins of the prisoner's horses. The three other men rode on ahead. The first Indian followed, leading the sheriff's horse. Behind him came the second redskin leading Barton's mount.

"Ware shore bluffs easily," Barton thought as he rode. "If he'd had his men search me he would have found the money in the money-belt around my waist. Reckon he figgers it is still in the bag like it was at the bank."

What had happened in the bank had been strange. Barton had stepped in with the intention of seeing about a loan on his small ranch. He had found there was no one in the Mesa Bank but Pecos Ware and Tom Clark, the teller. Ware had been holding up the bank when Barton entered.

Ware had got the drop on Barton, then handed him the money bag containing the ten thousand dollars. The bandit then had grabbed Barton's gun, unloaded it, thrust the weapon back into the rancher's hand and ordered him to get out of town fast.

Barton did exactly as he was told, for he knew if he didn't he would get a bullet in his back. He headed for the door just as Ware deliberately shot Clark dead, so the bank teller would be unable to tell what had happened.

IT WAS a smart trick upon Ware's part, for it looked as if Barton had robbed the bank single handed and then escaped. Ware let Barton get out of town and then started after him. If he got Barton somewhere out on the range Ware would have the money stolen from the bank and still not even be suspected of being the man who had actually committed the holdup.

But Barton had also been smart. He had left in a hurry, and nearly twenty-four hours passed before Ware and his bunch picked up the trail of the man they were after. They had pursued Barton to the canyon cave where he had turned at bay.

The trouble was that Sheriff Lang was obviously convinced that Dan Barton actually had committed the bank robbery and had fired the shot which had dropped the bank teller. Barton felt he would have trouble in making the lawman believe the true story. That was why Barton had made no attempt to tell the sheriff what had actually happened as yet.

Barton tried to release himself from his bonds, but the rawhide only dug deeper into the flesh of his wrists. The Indian who had tied him had done a good job. Barton kept trying to think of some way of freeing himself but failed.

It was getting close to sunset when the outlaws finally arrived at a hideout far back in the hills with their prisoners. The place consisted of some shacks in a blind canyon. Beyond the buildings was a small corral in which there were a few horses.

Barton and the sheriff were helped off their horses and placed in one of the shacks. It was strongly constructed with only a door and no windows. The heavy door was barred on the outside and Barton and the sheriff found themselves alone.

"They got us," Lang said. "Reckon I'm to blame for that. We should have moved faster gettin' out of the cave."

"Don't reckon it made much difference," Barton said. "They were waiting for us anyway. The important thing is to get away now."

"Shore," agreed the sheriff. "But how?"

"Don't know yet. They're right careless though. If we stand back to back I may be able to untie yore wrists, Sheriff."

"Good," said Lang. "Let's try it."

It was dark in the shack. The two men stood back to back while Barton fumbled with the rawhide that bound the sheriff's wrists. It was slow work and it took Barton a long time before he succeeded in getting the rawhide unfastened. Lang breathed a sigh of relief when he found his wrists were free.

"That's better," he said. "Now let's see what I can do about gettin' you loose."

The sheriff fumbled in his pocket and found a match and lighted it. By the faint glow he was able to see just how Barton was tied, and made faster work of releasing him. Barton found his arms were stiff from remaining so long in the same position. He waved them around to help the circulation.

"Now what?" the sheriff asked. "If we try to break the door down they'll all come a runnin'. No sense in tryin' that."

"Let's look this place over." Barton drew out matches and examined the walls of the shack by their light. "Feller that built this shore put it up solid. Not even a loose board that I can find."

"No," Lang said. "But there's a dirt floor and here's an old broken handled spade in the corner. Reckon we could dig our way out under one of the walls if we set our

minds to it."

"We shore could," Barton agreed.

They waited to see if any of the outlaws intended to bring them something to eat, but no one came near the shack. Evidently the rest of the band were waiting for Pecos Ware to return.

The prisoners found a spot and started digging beneath the back wall of the shack. First Barton dug for an hour and then the sheriff continued the work while Barton rested. It took them nearly three hours befor they had dug a hole under the rear wall big enough for a man to crawl through. They had worked as fast as possible, for at any moment they expected the outlaws to appear and discover what they were doing.

"That's it," Barton said as he finished his second shift of digging. "I'll try crawlin' through, Sheriff."

He got down and wiggled through the hole. It was a tight squeeze but he made it. Behind the shack there was no one in sight and the night was dark. Sheriff Lang was smaller and thinner than Barton and had less difficulty in crawling through.

FOR a moment they both stood listening tensely as they heard voices around in front of the shack. Evidently Ware had returned and decided to take a look at the prisoners.

Barton glanced at the sheriff and then they both turned and ran, heading for the cavvy corral. Their one thought was to get horses and get away from the hideout as swiftly as possible. They found they were in luck. Two saddled horses had been left ground hitched outside the corral.

"This is my own hoss," Lang muttered as he went to a big bay. "Reckon they must have found him and brought him in."

"Mine, too," Barton said as he swung into the saddle of a pinto. "Let's ride, Sheriff."

From back in the direction of the shack came a shout and then a gun roared. The outlaws had discovered their prisoners had escaped and were trying to stop them. Barton ducked low in the saddle and rode away, the pinto going at a swift gallop. Behind him came the sheriff on the bay.

Miles had passed before they finally halted and sat in their saddles, listening for some sound of pursuit. There was none. Apparently they had managed to get away from Ware and his wolf pack.

"Looks like we lost them," Barton said. "That truce we made in the cave is over now, Sheriff, so I'll be leavin' you."

"No," Lang said, his tone grim. "Sorry, Barton, but I'm arrestin' you and bringin' you in for that bank robbery."

Barton laughed. "Talkin' right big aren't yuh, Sheriff. Neither one of us has a gun."

The moon gleamed down as clouds drifted away. The two men sat in their saddles facing each other, left hands holding the reins of their horses.

"Yuh're wrong about that, Barton," Lang said. "I have got a gun."

Barton blinked as the moonlight gleamed on the blue barrel of a Colt in the sheriff's right hand. The sight of the weapon was so unexpected that it left him dazed.

"Where did yuh get that gun?" he demanded.

"Had it in my saddle roll," Lang said. "Ware's men didn't find it when they got my hoss or I guess they didn't bother to remove it. Like yuh said that bunch shore ain't very bright."

"Wish they'd been smarter." Barton's tone was bitter as he gazed at the gun in the sheriff's hand. "I didn't hold up the bank nor shoot Clark anyway."

"Hard for me to believe that now," the sheriff said quietly. "Took you a long time to get around to tellin' me yuh're not guilty, Barton. Afraid it's a little late unless yuh can prove it." His tone grew hard. "Yuh're under arrest, so head for town."

Barton shrugged and lapsed into silence. There didn't seem much use in telling his story about what had happened at the bank to the old lawman while Jed Lang was in his present mood.

He rode toward the town with the sheriff close behind him. It was a long ride and dawn broke when they were still some distance away from the little cowtown called Mesa. The sheriff rode up beside his prisoner. Lang's gun was in his holster on his right hip.

"Ware could be smart," the sheriff said. "He might figger I'd take you back to town as a prisoner and be waitin' for us in Mesa."

"More sense than tryin' to trail us durin' the night," Barton agreed. "Ware was smart enough to get me blamed for that bank holdup."

"I been thinkin' about that," said the sheriff." I was feelin' right proddy last night. Maybe I better hear yore story, Barton."

Barton told just what had happened when he stepped into the bank and found Ware robbing the place. The sheriff listened silently as they rode on slowly toward the town. The old lawman shook his head when Barton finished.

"It's a good story, and I'd shore like to

believe it," Lang said. "But I just can't. Trouble is it sounds like the sort of windy a feller would make up if he was guilty as all git-out."

"Then there's no use talkin' about it any more," Barton said.

They rode on in silence, the hoofs of their horses kicking up dust as they traveled along the single street of the town. It was still very early in the morning and Mesa had not come awake as yet. Most of the doors of the buildings that lined the street on either side were still closed and locked for the night.

There was no one on the plank walks. But down the street in front of the Glad Hand Saloon four tired looking horses stood at a hitch-rail with their heads drooping. The saloon was open.

BARTON and the sheriff dismounted at a hitch-rail in front of the lawman's office. Barton tied the reins of his horse to the rail. The sheriff secured his bay and then fumbled in his saddle roll. He drew out a pair of handcuffs and stepped toward his prisoner.

"I better put these on you, Barton," Lang said. "I can't risk you escapin' from me now."

He moved closer and snapped a cuff locked on Barton's left wrist. Barton's right hand flashed out and grabbed the gun out of Lang's holster. He stepped back, the Colt covering the sheriff, the handcuffs dangling from his left wrist.

"This is far as I go, Sheriff," he said. "I'm plumb sorry but I've just got to get away."

The sheriff stood motionless, not saying anything. Barton moved toward his horse; then changed his mind abruptly. He ran down the street as he saw four men come out of the saloon. They were Pecos Ware and three of his outlaws.

Ware shouted and grabbed for his gun when he saw Barton running toward them. Barton ducked into an alley at the side of the general store and another building. He raced back behind the store. A huge empty wooden barrel caught his eye. He climbed into the barrel, intending to duck down out of sight and surprise them when they came looking for him.

But the barrel proved to be too small and Ware appeared too soon for him to carry out his plan.

He was still standing in the barrel when Ware came rushing through the alley. The outlaw leader saw Barton at once. Ware fired and his bullet struck the iron rim of the barrel with a loud clang. Barton's gun roared.

Ware swayed. The bullet had got him in the chest.

Barton leaped out of the barrel, and ran toward the outlaw chief who fell. The three men with Ware appeared, guns ready as they came through the alley. Barton fired again and downed one of them. The six-guns of the other two men flashed and a bullet nicked Barton's shoulder.

"Lift yore hands high!"

It was the sheriff. He had appeared behind the two remaining outlaws with a rifle in his hands.

"Stop that shootin' and drop yore guns," Sheriff Lang said.

The two men glanced back and then dropped their guns. They saw that Lang had them covered.

Barton knelt beside Ware. A glance showed him that the outlaw chief was badly wounded and dying.

"You win, Barton," Ware said, his voice loud in a sudden silence. "Reckon I done wrong, gettin' yuh blamed for bank robbery—my last mistake." He grinned faintly at Barton. "What did yuh do with the money I made yuh take from the bank?"

"Been wearin' it in a money-belt around my waist all of the time," Barton said. "You shore bluff easily, Ware. Yuh'd have found the ten thousand if yuh'd searched me."

"Bluff easily," Ware repeated. "And die hard."

He shuddered and then grew still. The town had been awakened by the shooting. Men poured into the alley, shouting and asking excited questions.

"Barton just shot the man who robbed the Mesa Bank," the sheriff announced. "It was Pecos Ware who done it and killed the teller. These men here are part of Ware's bunch." Lang nodded to the two desperadoes. "There's more of them, but we won't have much trouble gettin' the rest."

Dan Barton walked over and handed the Colt to the sheriff.

"Here's yore gun, Jed," he said. "Shoots right good."

The old lawman grinned as he unlocked the cuff on Barton's left wrist and took it off.

"Thanks, Dan," Lang said. "Looks like yuh've had a heap of trouble since the bank robbery. But I reckon the bank will give yuh a reward for keepin' that ten thousand dollars for them."

"Hope so." Barton glanced at the barrel and smiled. "Shore had me over a barrel for awhile."

Happy Flower put a restraining hand on the threatening brave

THE SPIRIT OF LOST RIVER

By SCOTT CARLETON

Buffalo Billy Bates goes plummeting into a waterfall as a Navajo sacrifice — and discovers the secret of the valley!

BUFFALO BILLY BATES was the only white man who had ever set foot in Lost River Canyon. The young white hunter had gratified a desire which had tugged at his adventurous spirit since his early youth, when he had heard the legend around the Council fires of the Navajos near old Santa Fe and Taos.

Billy Bates had been raised among the Indians in high New Mexico where he had learned their customs. He was adept with all their weapons, he spoke their tongue, and had even attained to the status of a Chief because of his prowess.

Now he was alone in a territory which was tabooed to red and white man alike. He had found the secret trail to the floor of the deep valley where the flying horses lived. He had satisfied his secret desire and he could keep his secret.

Billy Bates moved with the cunning stealth of a stalking Indian as he pulled himself up to the shelving plateau by means of twisted wild grape vines. Clad in fringed buckskins, with beaded moccasins on his feet, his tall muscular body blended with the drab walls immuring Lost River Canyon on every side.

At twenty-two, Buffalo Billy was a veteran of the long trails. He was six feet tall, and when game was plentiful, Billy Bates

weighed a hundred and seventy-five pounds. Game was plentiful in this forbidden canyon which was a hunter's paradise.

Billy Bates stepped onto the mesa and took a deep breath after his long and arduous climb. He jerked his head sharply when a warning sound came to his sensitive ears, and his long brown hair touched his wide shoulders. His arms were pinned to his sides as a rawhide riata tightened savagely. Then the steel tips of several long hunting lances penned him in to make a complete circle.

Billy Bates restrained the desire to make it a fight when he saw the painted faces of the braves behind the lances. He recognized them as Navajos who were usually peaceful. Now they were painted for war, and a tall old medicine man raised his hands and spoke solemnly in the Indian tongue.

"White man must die. Great Spirit very angry with his children!"

Billy Bates stood very still as his tawny eyes studied the old shaman. The medicine man was painted for a tribal ceremony. But this would be a sacrificial ceremony, to appease the wrath of the Great Spirit.

"My red brothers are very hungry," Billy Bates said quietly. "The Navajos are starving while there is plenty of game."

He spoke in their own tongue, and several of the lean braves licked their lips. The medicine man reached for a little skin pouch around his waist which held his breech clout. The ribs stood out against his coppery skin like staves in an old barrel.

"There will be rain, and meat in abundance," the medicine man declared positively. "You are known to the Navajos as Chief Long Hair. You have violated the home of the Great Spirit which has entered into the body of the Flying Horse. Chief Long Hair must die!"

Billy Bates knew the futility of argument. The ancient legend told of the conquest of the red men by the white warriors under the Spaniard who was known as Cortez. The white men had ridden beautiful horses brought from across the blue water, but Cortez, their chief, had straddled a great golden horse.

Cortez and his Conquistadores had camped on this same mesa many moons ago, and while sleeping, a great wind had swept across the land. The horses had stampeded over the cliff, and had been dashed to death on the rocky floor of the valley hundreds of feet below. All had died with the exception of the golden horse which the Spaniards saw grazing on the lush grass by the pool under a waterfall.

The legend told how the Great Spirit had entered the body of the Golden Horse, and had carried it to safety on a pair of huge wings. This was the flying horse of Lost River Canyon, and the home of the Great Spirit.

"Tie his hands securely," the old medicine man spoke sternly. "Chief Long Hair must die!"

ON A smooth slab of rock, Buffalo Billy Bates stood above the tumbling waterfall. He could not see the pool at the bottom because of the spraying mist, but he judged the distance to be a hundred feet. More than fifty Navajo braves stood silently behind him, listening to Gray Eagle, the old medicine man.

"The Great Spirit is angry, my brothers," the old shaman said sorrowfully. "The Flying Horse demands a sacrifice. Now we have two who have violated our sacred traditions!"

Billy Bates turned his head slightly. Then he was to have company on his last journey which the old shaman had told him would end in the Happy Hunting Ground. But who was the second victim?

"Chief Long Hair will go first to prepare the way for Happy Flower," Gray Eagle continued sternly. "Happy Flower was to be the bride of Running Wolf, son of our Chief. Happy Flower tried to run away, saying she loved another man. Happy Flower will follow the young white chief. I have spoken!"

Billy Bates drew himself up proudly. He told himself that a brave man could die but once. But what of the Indian maiden? Knowing the Indian customs, Billy Bates knew what had happened. Happy Flower had disobeyed her father, and also the Chief of the tribe. And the Great Spirit was angry. He had punished the Indians with a terrible drought, and there was little game for food.

A movement to the right behind him caused Billy Bates to turn his head slightly. Then he jerked a trifle when he saw a young Indian girl being pushed forward. She wore a white buckskin robe which was to have been her wedding garment, and her hands were tightly bound behind her back.

Buffalo Billy stared, and his steady eyes clouded with pity. Happy Flower was very pretty, and not more than eighteen years old. She had refused to name her lover, but she showed no fear as she was pushed toward the brink of the precipice.

"Look below," the old Shaman said sternly

in the Navajo tongue. "You can see Lost River, and no one knows where it goes. You will not go alone, Happy Flower. The young white Chief has angered the Great Spirit, and he must also die!"

A tall brave stepped up behind Billy Bates and grasped the white hunter by the forearms. Billy Bates found his tongue then and began to speak in the Navajo tongue.

"My medicine is strong, oh Gray Eagle," he addressed the medicine man. "Perhaps the Flying Horse will tell me the secret of Lost River!"

"My brothers are hungry," Gray Eagle pronounced sternly. "We must appease the anger of the Great Spirit. Then he will feed his children!"

Billy Bates took a deep breath as he heard the brave shuffle his moccasined feet. Then he was pushed violently from the smooth stone slab, but no cry left the lips of Billy Bates as he hurtled through the air.

A great shout went up as the white hunter's body disappeared into the mist of the tumbling waterfall. Billy Bates closed his eyes, and then suddenly his body was wet and cold as he plunged down through the clear icy water.

A man didn't struggle when he was entering the portals of the Great Unknown, and Billy Bates relaxed his muscles. After what seemed an eternity, he felt a stunning jar as the plunging waterfall guided his plummeting form into the deep cold pool.

Down, down he felt himself going, and Buffalo Billy began to struggle. The water loosened the rawhide thong which bound his wrists, and Billy Bates jerked his arms. His hands came free, and he turned swiftly and began to kick with all his strength.

Now his breath was straining against his bursting lungs as he fought his way upward to the surface of the deep pool which had miraculously broken his fall. When he could hold his breath no longer, it escaped from his tight lips in a hissing sound.

Billy Bates heard that hissing. If he had been under water, he would have heard nothing but the roar in his ears. He opened his eyes to find inky darkness surrounding him. And yet, it had been early morning when he had been captured, and pushed into the leap of death.

Taking a deep breath Buffalo Billy began to swim. Then he saw a faint finger of light up ahead, and a moment later the young hunter pulled himself to a sloping bank where he lay breathing hard, and trying to get his bearings.

"The secret of Lost River," he murmured drowsily. "I found it yesterday, but I didn't know!"

Billy Bates recalled the dip he had taken into the deep pool on the previous day. He had felt the strong pull of some unseen current, and had fought his way back to safety. Now he knew. Lost River ran through an underground channel for more than a mile. He had seen where the stream emerged outside the canyon where the Great Spirit lived in the Flying Horse.

Then he remembered something else. He had seen a lone Indian brave paddling a log dug-out canoe in the swift stream below the rapids of the canyon. The Navajo had not seen Billy Bates who had swiftly withdrawn to avoid detection.

SUDDENLY he remembered the fate of Happy Flower, and Buffalo Billy sprang to his feet. Would the Indian maiden survive the terrible plunge through the waterfall? He whirled to face the stygian blackness, and then Billy Bates heard a soft moaning sound barely audible above the murmuring roar of Lost River.

Crouching on the sandy bar, Billy Bates strained his eyes to pierce the darkness. He could see better than most white men in the dark, and he was sure that he could make out something in the murky gloom. Again he heard the faint moan, and Billy Bates dove into the water like an otter.

Several swift strokes took him into the stream, and his groping right hand touched something soft. His fingers closed like a vise, but when no struggle followed, Billy Bates changed his position. He had found Happy Flower.

"The Great Spirit has spared you," he said in the Navajo tongue, but when he received no answer, Billy Bates knew that the girl was unconscious. Holding her with one strong arm, he struck out for the sand-bar with powerful thrusts of his muscular legs.

When he again touched the sand-pit, Buffalo Billy Bates was closer to the finger of light which marked the far opening of the deep cave. He pulled himself up on the bar, dragged the girl to safety, and listened for the beat of her heart. He smiled in the gloom when he heard it beating strongly.

Billy Bates knew the crude method of artificial respiration, and he turned Happy Flower over with her face on her outstretched left arm. Then his hands firmly grasped the small of her back and began to press gently, but with a measured rhythm.

Minutes passed, and Happy Flower made no move. Billy Bates continued his pressure, and then he heard a tremulous sigh.

"Little Otter," she murmured drowsily. "I knew I would find you, Little Otter!"

So that was the name of her silent lover, Billy Bates thought, and then he turned the Indian girl and raised her head.

"I am not Little Otter," he corrected gently. "I am Billy Bates. The Shaman calls me Chief Long Hair!"

Happy Flower closed her eyes and sighed deeply. Her voice came in a low whisper to the young white hunter.

"Then we are in the Happy Hunting Ground, and my people will be fed again. Perhaps the Great Spirit is no longer angry."

Buffalo Billy Bates smiled grimly as he watched the light which marked the far opening of the deep underground stream. He wondered how the Indian girl could have withstood the plunge through the falls, and then he knew. Like himself, tthe plunging waters of the cascade had seized her hurtling form to guide it into the pool. The very force of the tumbling water would keep a body from turning over and over.

Happy Flower opened her eyes as Billy Bates tugged at the rawhide thong which bound her slender wrists. The pliable leather had stretched, and the girl studied the face of Billy Bates in the semi-gloom.

"Try to walk," Billy Bates suggested. "I will help you. Perhaps the Great Spirit is not angry with us."

Taking the girl's right hand as though he were guiding a child, Bates kept to the sand bar and began to make his way toward the splotch of light. Happy Flower remained silent, but Buffalo Billy knew she was under the impression that they had died and were now in the Happy Hunting Ground.

As the light became stronger, the girl's strength also increased. Her soggy bridal gown of beaded buckskin clung to her graceful figure, and her lips parted in a startled murmur as they left the brush-choked entrance of the cave.

Like one who had been there before, Billy Bates led the way, and soon they were in knee-deep grass on the floor of the forbidden canyon. Happy Flower tried to arrange her buckskin gown. She stopped abruptly, stared at a copse of willows by the rushing stream, and pointed at three horses under the trees.

"The Flying Horse!" she whispered. "But I see three!"

Billy Bates was also staring at the three horses. He had left his bay gelding in the canyon where feed was abundant, and also the rangy pinto stallion which carried his light pack. The pinto was also trained to the hunt, and was the inseparable companion of the bay Morgan horse.

But that third horse! Smaller than the other two, the stranger was a beautiful golden color, with pure white mane and tail. It was standing close to the pinto stallion, and then Billy Bates knew the answer. The golden horse was a mare.

"Come, Happy Flower," he said quietly. "My medicine is strong, and the Great Spirit has provided us with food!"

The Indian girl followed as Billy Bates strode across the valley floor with long swift strides. The bay horse raised its head and whinnied a welcome, and like a startled deer, the golden mare whirled and raced away. Then Bates was talking to the two horses, and as Happy Flower came closer, she noticed the hobbles on the bay.

Like all Indians, Happy Flower had been trained to read sign. She saw the charred remains of a fire, the light pack hanging in a tree, and a quarter of a deer in a higher branch.

"This is your camp, Chief Long Hair," she observed simply. "The Great Spirit will be very angry. Now my people will starve!"

Billy Bates did not argue. He gathered up tinder and dry branches, struck fire from a flint, and walked to the tree where the deer meat was hanging out of reach. A rawhide riata was fixed to the base of the tree, and Billy Bates threw off his ties. The riata was thrown over an upper branch with the end tied to the deer meat, and he lowered it to the ground. Taking a skinning knife from his pack, Billy Bates sliced off meat and whittled a pair of pointed twigs for spits.

HAPPY FLOWER watched for a time, then she took the spits. She said nothing to her rescuer, but it was woman's work to cook. Busying herself, she used corn-meal sparingly to make hunter's bread, and when the meat was done, they ate in hungry silence.

"Running Wolf saw you climbing up the cliff," Happy Flower at last broke the silence. "He is the son of our chief."

"It was Running Wolf who sent me over the cliff to the Great Spirit," Billy Bates said quietly, but a little smile played around his lips.

"It was Running Wolf who also sent me," Happy Flower murmured. She showed no resentment. "The Canyon of Lost River is the home of the Great Spirit who dwells in

the Flying Horse!"

"I found the secret entrance to the valley," Buffalo Billy said musingly. "I found the secret of Lost River which disappears into the ground. A young Navajo brave was following the tracks of my horses, and I found the secret entrance when I hid from him. He was in a dug-out canoe on the lower reaches of the river."

Happy Flower sat up very straight, her brown eyes bright with curiosity. Then she sighed, as though it were all a dream from which she would soon awaken. But her eyes brightened again as she stared at the remnants of the simple meal which had restored her strength.

"The Indian brave," she whispered. "Was he tall and young, with the pelt of the otter on his back between the shoulders?"

Billy Bates smiled. He too had been taught to read sign. Now he was certain the brave in the canoe had been Little Otter, Happy Flower's secret lover.

"Yes," he answered quietly. "His canoe overturned in the little rapids near the mouth of the cave, but Little Otter is a good swimmer."

"He is—alive, Chief Long Hair?"

"He was," Billy Bates answered with a shrug of his wide shoulders. "Do not move, Happy Flower, but look across the valley where I point!"

The Indian girl followed his pointing finger, and caught her breath quickly. A band of horses were standing under the trees in the deep bracken. Most of them were small, but one magnificent animal was scenting the wind with flaring nostrils.

"The flying horse!" Billy Bates whispered, scarcely moving his lips. "The great golden stallion!"

"The Great Spirit!" Happy Flower whispered tremulously. "Ah yeeh!"

Billy Bates smiled as her lips unconsciously uttered the mourning cry of her tribe. Then as Bates stretched to his feet, the great stallion snorted and whirled, and a moment later the band disappeared. Billy Bates turned to the Indian maiden.

"The Great Spirit did not harm us," he assured her. "Now we will break camp and leave him in peace."

Happy Flower was silent as she watched Billy Bates make his simple preparations. She stared at the heavy Sharp's rifle resting on his blankets, at the hand-made saddle he lifted to the back of the bay horse, and her eyes widened with wonder when Billy Bates took a short chokecherry hunting bow from his pack.

"My red brothers will be hungry," he said quietly. "You will ride the pinto horse."

Without question, Happy Flower mounted the pinto from the right side, Indian fashion. Billy Bates mounted the saddled bay and led the way down the canyon floor which grew ever more narrow. They rode in silence for some time, and presently Buffalo Billy placed a finger to his lips. Then he was out of the saddle, and his fingers reached for a steel-tipped arrow from the quiver slung across his back.

Happy Flower watched as he stalked into the bracken with the stealth of a hunting Navajo. She saw his right arm draw back, heard the twang of the bow-string, and then a sudden thud.

When Billy Bates came out of the brush, he was carrying a young deer across his shoulder. Walking to the wide-eyed girl, Billy Bates placed the slain deer in front of her on the withers of the pinto. Then he again mounted the bay and proceeded down the narrowing valley.

TWILIGHT was painting the rocky cliffs with ever-changing colors. The two horses were tied back in the willows which fringed the banks of the rushing stream which was Lost River.

Billy Bates was watching the river with Happy Flower on his left. His hand strayed out and touched her arm. Then he pointed to a canoe just rounding the bend of the swift stream. His head jerked up when the girl uttered a clear ringing cry.

Bates saw the lone occupant of the canoe dip his paddle deep to hold it steady. Again the girl cried out in the Navajo tongue.

"Little Otter!"

The young Indian brave dug deep with his paddle and churned the water as he made for the sloping bank. Happy Flower was standing erect, and the young Navajo came to her with swift powerful strokes of his flashing paddle.

Happy Flower had forgotten her rescuer in the excitement. Billy Bates crouched down in the brush, and when the dugout touched the grassy bank, the Navajo brave leaped out, drew it high on the bank, and turned to greet the running girl.

Slowly Buffalo Billy stretched to his feet just as Little Otter reached out to touch Happy Flower. The young brave saw the white hunter for the first time, and stepping back, his hand flashed down to the long-bladed hunting knife in his beaded belt.

"Great Spirit very angry," Little Otter said sternly. "Little Otter make sacrifice!"

New HOSPITAL and SURGICAL Policy
FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

Costs Only 3c a Day for Adults

Only 1½c a Day for Children

Now ONE Family Hospital and Surgical Policy insures your whole family—mother, father, and children! Issued for anyone now in good health from 3 months to 65 years. Provides cash to help pay hospital and surgical bills for EACH and EVERY person insured; pays benefits even if you go to hospital several times during year. Pays up to $4.00 a day for 90 days for hospital room expense—pays surgical operation benefits from $5.00 to $100.00—pays $10.00 for operating room, $5.00 for medicines, and for other expenses such as X-rays, laboratory, etc., up to a total of $50.00. Yes! This Family Policy helps pay hospital and surgical bills for accidents immediately; for most sicknesses (after policy in force 30 days); even for childbirth and female disorders (after one year). Benefits start, as provided, the first day you enter hospital. You select your own doctor and hospital. This policy issued DIRECT at special family rates by big, reliable company with over $2,000,000.00 surplus for policyholders. SEND NO MONEY. Mail coupon for 10-Day Trial Offer. No agent will call on you. ACT TODAY—NOW!

STERLING INSURANCE CO.
N-4206 Sterling Bldg., Chicago 11, Ill.

Send me 10-Day Trial Offer of LOW-COST Family Group Plan for Hospital and Surgical Insurance.

Name.....

Address.....

City.....*State*.....

LEARN MEAT CUTTING
At Home—In Spare Time

Get into the vital meat industry. Concise, practical Home Training based on 25 years proven instruction method used at National's famous resident school. Prepares you for bigger pay as Meat Cutter, supervisor, market manager or more money in your own store. Go as rapidly as your spare time permits. Diploma. Start NOW to turn your spare hours into money. Send for FREE bulletin today. No obligation.
National School of Meat Cutting, Inc., Dept. TG-16, Toledo 4, O.

LAW...

STUDY AT HOME Legally trained men win higher positions and bigger success in business and public life. Greater opportunities now than ever before.
More Ability: More Prestige: More Money We guide you step by step. You can train at home during spare time. Degree of LL.B. We furnish all text material, including 14-volume Law Library. Low cost, easy terms. Get our valuable 48-page "Law Training for Leadership" and "Evidence" books FREE. Send for them NOW.
LASALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY, 417 South Dearborn Street
A Correspondence Institution Dept. 3329-L Chicago 5, Ill.

Happy Flower leaped in front of the threatening brave, talking swiftly in her native tongue. She explained how she had been sacrificed, told about the terrifying plunge through the Falls. How Chief Long Hair had rescued her, and had now brought her safely from the forbidden valley to join her lover.

Little Otter listened in silence. The shaman had said that the Great Spirit was angry. The Navajos were starving, and there had been a long drought.

"The Great Spirit not angry now," Happy Flower added. "It was the Flying Horse who showed Chief Long Hair the secret trail. The Great Spirit guided us through the big cave where Lost River becomes lost!"

"Your medicine heap strong, Chief Long Hair," Little Otter said quietly, and sheathing his knife, made the sign of peace.

"We have meat for your brothers," Billy Bates answered slowly. "We hurry now, Little Otter," and he pointed to the graying sky. "The Thunder Bird will soon bring the rains!"

Little Otter glanced at the scudding clouds and nodded solemnly. He did not touch Happy Flower, but his dark eyes studied her closely, and spoke a language more expressive than words.

"I have a plan," Billy Bates broke the silence. "You will do as I say? You will trust me?"

"Chief Long Hair speak with the single tongue," Little Otter said simply. "Your medicine very strong. We will do as you say!"

Buffalo Billy talked earnestly for a long time. Occasionally he would use the sign language, and talk with his expressive hands. When he had finished, Little Otter and Happy Flower both nodded their dark heads, and Billy Bates walked back to his horses.

Flames from a huge Council fire leaped high in a little valley through which a sluggish stream wandered before losing itself in the sand. Painted Navajos danced around the fire before which sat Gray Eagle, the old medicine man.

The shaman sprinkled some powder on the fire, and the flames changed to green. Then the voice of Gray Eagle rose in a pleading call.

"Do not be angry with thy children, Oh Great Spirit. We have made the sacrifices, and the thirsty land needs rain. We are hungry, and there is no game!"

(Continued on page 80)

Quick help for Rupture!

Why put up with days . . . months . . . YEARS of discomfort, worry and fear—if we can provide you with the support you want and need? Learn NOW about this perfected truss-invention for most forms of reducible rupture. Surely you keenly desire . . . you eagerly CRAVE to enjoy most of life's activities and pleasures once again. To work . . . to play . . . to live . . . to love . . . with the haunting Fear of Rupture lessened in your thoughts! Literally *thousands* of Rupture sufferers *have* entered this *Kingdom of Paradise Regained* . . . have worn our support without the slightest inconvenience. Perhaps we can do as much for you. Some wise man said, "Nothing is impossible in this world"—and it is true, for where other trusses have failed is where we have had our greatest success in many cases! Even doctors—thousands of them—have ordered for themselves and their patients. Unless your case is absolutely hopeless, do not *despair*. The coupon below brings our Free Rupture Book in plain envelope. Send the coupon now.

Patented AIR-CUSHION Support Gives *Wonderful Protection*

Think of it! Here's a surprising yet simple-acting invention that helps Nature hold the average rupture securely but gently, day and night. Thousands of grateful letters express heartfelt thanks for relief from pain and worry . . . results beyond the expectations of the writers. What is this invention—how does it work? Will it help me? Get the complete, fascinating facts on the Brooks Air-Cushion Appliance—send now for *free* Rupture Book.

Cheap—Sanitary—Comfortable

Rich or poor—ANYONE can afford to buy this remarkable, LOW-PRICED rupture invention! But look out for imitations and counterfeits. The Genuine Brooks Air-Cushion truss is never sold in stores or by agents. Your Brooks is made up after your order is received, to fit your particular case. You buy direct at the low "maker-to-user" price. The perfected Brooks is sanitary, lightweight, inconspicuous. Has no hard pads to gouge painfully into the flesh, no stiff, punishing springs, no metal girdle to rust or corrode. It is GUARANTEED to bring you heavenly comfort and security or it costs NOTHING. The Air-Cushion works in its own unique way—softly, silently doing its part in providing protection. Learn what this patented invention may mean to you—send the coupon quick!

PROOF!

Read These Reports on Reducible Rupture Cases

(In our files at Marshall, Michigan, we have over 44,000 grateful letters which have come to us entirely unsolicited and without any sort of payment.)

Never Loses a Day's Work in Shipyard

"A few weeks ago I received the Appliance you made for me. Wouldn't do without it now. My fellow workers notice how much better I can do my work and get around over these ships—and believe me, the work in a Navy shipyard is anything but easy. I never lose a day's work now."—J. A. Comer, 1505 Green Ave., Orange, Texas.

Perfect Relief—Full Satisfaction

"Your truss gives FULL SATISFACTION. I feel it my moral duty to testify to the world:—(A)—That I have been ruptured 45 years. (B)—was operated on scientifically ten years ago when 76 years of age; but the rupture returned soon. Have tried everything; but only now do I find PERFECT RELIEF in your appliance."—Lee R. Stroud, 601 E. Grove St., Kaufman, Texas.

C. E. BROOKS, Inventor

SENT ON TRIAL!

No . . . don't order a Brooks now . . . FIRST get the complete, revealing explanation of this world-famous rupture invention. THEN decide whether you want to try for the comfort—the wonderful degree of freedom—the security—the blessed relief that thousands of men, women and children have reported. They found our invention the answer to their prayers! And you risk NOTHING in making the TEST, as the complete appliance is SENT ON TRIAL. Surely you owe it to yourself to investigate this no-risk trial. Send for the facts—now—today—hurry! All correspondence strictly confidential.

MAIL THIS COUPON NOW!

BROOKS APPLIANCE CO.
382-C State St., Marshall, Mich.

Without obligation, please send your FREE BOOK on Rupture, PROOF of Results, and TRIAL OFFER—all in plain envelope.

Name .....

Street .....

City..... State.....

State whether for Man ☐ Woman ☐ or Child ☐

FREE! Latest Rupture Book Explains All!

← Sent You in Plain Envelope **JUST CLIP and SEND COUPON**

Brooks Appliance Co., 382-C State St., Marshall, Mich.

SMART WIFE, PAZO RELIEVED THOSE SIMPLE PILES

Don't just suffer the agonizing pain, torture, itching of simple piles. Remember, for over thirty years amazing PAZO ointment has given prompt, comforting relief to millions. It gives you soothing, welcome palliative relief.

HOW PAZO OINTMENT WORKS

1. Soothes inflamed areas—relieves pain and itching. 2. Lubricates hardened, dried parts, helps prevent cracking and soreness. 3. Tends to reduce swelling and check minor bleeding. 4. Provides quick and easy method of application.

SPECIAL PILE PIPE FOR EASY APPLICATION

Pazo ointment tube has a specially designed, perforated Pile Pipe, making application simple and thorough. Ask your doctor about wonderful Pazo ointment and the soothing, blessed relief it gives for simple piles.

PAZO SUPPOSITORIES TOO!

Some persons, and many doctors, prefer to use suppositories. So Pazo is also made in handy suppositories. Same soothing relief! Get Pazo in the form you prefer, at your druggists today.

A Product of
THE GROVE LABORATORIES INC. • St. Louis, Mo.

PERSONAL PHOTO STATIONERY
THAT CARRIES YOUR PHOTOGRAPH

Now... you can make your letters to that boy or girl in service and to friends at home like a "personal visit" when you use rich, two-fold **Photographic Stationery** with life-like photograph of yourself at the top. A marvelous morale builder. Ideal gift with a friend's picture. $1

SPECIAL OFFER—Just send $1.00 with photo, snapshot or negative for our Special Box of *Photographic Stationery*. Photo returned.
NATIONAL PHOTO ART, Dept. 15-4, JANESVILLE, WISC.

Free for Asthma During Winter

If you suffer with those terrible attacks of Asthma when it is cold and damp; if raw, Wintry winds make you choke as if each gasp for breath was the very last; if restful sleep is impossible because of the struggle to breathe; if you feel the disease is slowly wearing your life away, don't fail to send at once to the Frontier Asthma Co. for a free trial of a remarkable method. No matter where you live or whether you have any faith in any remedy under the Sun, send for this free trial. If you have suffered for a lifetime and tried everything you could learn of without relief; even if you are utterly discouraged, do not abandon hope but send today for this free trial. It will cost you nothing. Address

FRONTIER ASTHMA CO.
643-S Frontier Bldg.
462 Niagara Street Buffalo 1, New York

Gray Eagle leaped to his feet as a clear voice answered from the darkness beyond the circle of firelight.

"There will be rain, and I send you food!"

The leaping Indians stopped dancing. They turned toward the voice, holding their hunting lances with the steel-tips pointing toward the parched earth.

Billy Bates rode into the firelight on his bay horse, and his right hand was out in the sign of peace. The pinto stallion followed him, and the young white hunter dismounted quickly. Taking the slain deer from the pinto, he carried it to Gray Eagle and placed it on the ground before the astonished old medicine man.

"The Great Spirit has sent you meat," Billy Bates said solemnly. "The rains will come before morning," and he pointed to the scudding clouds above the mesa from which he and Happy Flower had been offered as sacrifices.

Gray Eagle stared, and his lean jaw was sagging. Here was one who had come back from the Valley of Shadows peopled only by the spirits of those who had died. He had seen the tall white hunter plunge into the watertfall; had heard the splash of the falling body as it had entered the deep mysterious pool at the foot of the falls.

"You are—Spirit?" Gray Eagle asked hesitantly.

"I saw the Great Spirit," Billy Bates answered calmly. "I saw much game, and I learned many secrets. Tell the squaws to prepare the feast!"

GRAY EAGLE spoke swiftly without turning his head. Several Indian women came forward and took the slain deer. The old medicine man sat down on his blankets and indicated a place at his right for Billy Bates.

"Your medicine is strong, my brother," he said solemnly. "You will tell me the secrets?"

"The river is not lost," Billy Bates began slowly, and he stared at the sluggish stream which caught the reflections from the fire. "The river comes out again down below the cliff. It is the same river, but much bigger."

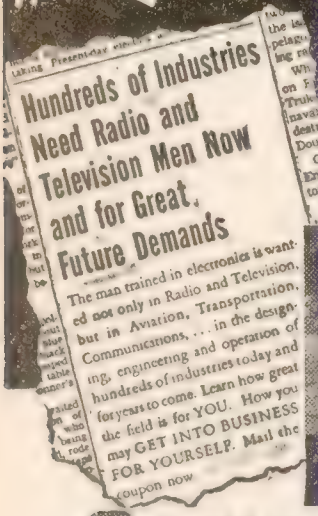
Gray Eagle nodded his graying head.

"I have heard about the other river from Little Otter," he agreed.

He paused for a long moment as his tribesmen gathered about, but kept a respectful

(Continued on page 82)

GET INTO RADIO ELECTRONICS & TELEVISION NOW!


Hundreds of Industries Need Radio and Television Men Now and for Great Future Demands
The man trained in electronics is wanted not only in Radio and Television, but in Aviation, Transportation, Communications, . . . in the designing, engineering and operation of hundreds of industries today and for years to come. Learn how great the field is for YOU. How you may GET INTO BUSINESS FOR YOURSELF. Mail the coupon now

Send for FREE Lesson and Prove to Yourself How Quick and Easy You Get Ahead in Radio by the NEW

SHOP METHOD HOME TRAINING

OF THIS GREAT, ESTABLISHED RESIDENT SCHOOL

Learn by Doing!

Use Real Radio Equipment Furnished with Your Course

Experience is the best teacher and you learn by experience with the National Shop Method of Home Training. You build a long distance, high fidelity, superheterodyne receiver—build many other circuits and conduct experiments with the big kits of standard radio parts included with your training at no extra cost.

Here is the kind of training that gives you a first hand knowledge of advanced and approved means and methods. Not only do you understand the basic principles of the industry but you become expert with practical experience.

Send the coupon for detailed information on all the different departments of this course of training.

Choose Your Future

1. Radio is a $6-billion business. Radar, just starting, already does $2-billion a year.
2. Thousands of men needed for stations and communication companies — for operation and maintenance.
3. Half million jobs in Television right at start is the opinion of industrial leaders.
4. Limitless future in Electronics—in the home and industry.

Get ready for Television and FM. Get your share of the Radio Service Business. Take your place in industry as an Electronics expert. Here is a sensationally improved way for you to get the right training. Study in spare time—odd hours, even minutes—and have the advantage of actual shop experience behind you.

This exclusive shop method of home training comes to you right from one of the world's greatest vocational educational centers — the resident training shops and experimental laboratories of the great NATIONAL SCHOOLS. It is sound, based on the actual experience of qualified instructors, engineers and technicians—men who are right in the industry.

National Schools has been training men for higher pay and greater opportunity for more than a third of a century. Fill out and mail the coupon below for details.

Grasp this Opportunity

Experts agree that Radio, Electronics and Television is right at the start of the greatest boom in history. Right now is the time to prepare yourself for BIG SUCCESS and LIFE-TIME SECURITY. Take part in the great expansion. The field is wide open.

You need no previous experience—no electrical or mechanical knowledge. National Shop Method Home Training is complete in itself — up-to-date.

Make use of your free time NOW to build yourself a great future. See how quickly you progress — how easy it is to get a firm, practical understanding of Electronics in all branches.

See for Yourself

Take the first step now. Fill out, and mail the coupon below. Be among the first to get into the big money — to win a position of importance — to have a BUSINESS OF YOUR OWN.

The industry is crying for trained men everywhere. It holds out rich rewards — a prosperous future. Well trained men ONLY are wanted.

Examine the National Shop Method of Home Training carefully in the quiet of your own home. Make up your own mind. No salesman from National will call on you. Fill out and mail the coupon today.

Shop Method Training Wins Good Jobs

"My latest offer was $5,800.00 as Radio Photo Engineer . . . but I'm doing well where I am now engaged. I am deeply indebted to National."—Joseph Grumich, Lake Hiawatha, New Jersey.

"Due to my training at National I was selected to instruct in the laboratory work of Navy and Marines."—E. F. Wright, Blackfoot, Idaho.

"I believe National offers the best course to be had . . . Keep up the good work."—O. K. Ivey, Washington, D. C.

Read what hundreds of other enthusiastic students have written about National Training. Send in your coupon today.

GET THESE 2 BIG BOOKS FREE!
Learn for yourself just how easily this SHOP METHOD HOME TRAINING gives you the practical, down-to-earth experience you can't get from theory alone!

NATIONAL SCHOOLS

LOS ANGELES 37, CALIFORNIA EST. 1905

MAIL OPPORTUNITY COUPON FOR QUICK ACTION

National Schools, Dept. TQ-3
4000 South Figueroa Street, Los Angeles 37, California

(Mail this in an envelope or paste on a post card.)

Send me FREE the two books mentioned in your ad including a sample lesson of your course. I understand no salesman will call on me.

NAME ..... AGE .....

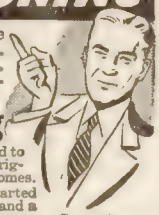
ADDRESS .....

CITY ..... STATE .....

Include your zone number

START NOW TOWARD A FUTURE IN
REFRIGERATION and AIR CONDITIONING

Refrigeration and Air Conditioning are among the giant Industries of America. Such industries need men who KNOW. Many men servicing and installing equipment are making large incomes.



Spare Time Training

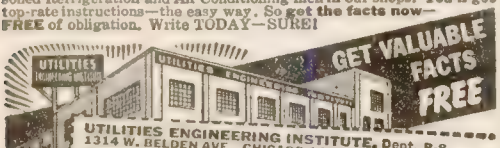
If mechanically inclined, get the training you need to qualify for experience installing & servicing Refrigeration and Air Conditioning in stores, offices, homes.

Then you should have no difficulty getting started in these great industries. As experience, tools and a personal following are acquired; you may find it practical, later, to start your own REFRIGERATION and AIR CONDITIONING SHOP.

Rush Coupon Below Today!

Practical Interesting Training

You'll like our way of training—through capable home-study instruction followed by practice on actual equipment under watchful eyes of seasoned Refrigeration and Air Conditioning men in our shops. You'll get top-rate instructions—the easy way. So get the facts now—FREE of obligation. Write TODAY—SURE!



UTILITIES ENGINEERING INSTITUTE, Dept. R-8
1314 W. BELDEN AVE., CHICAGO 14, ILL.
REFRIGERATION TRAINING SINCE 1927

Please send me the Free FACTS about opportunities in Air Conditioning and Mechanical Refrigeration. I marked the one that interests me most.

☐ Air Conditioning ☐ Mechanical Refrigeration

NAME _____ Age _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ Zone _____ STATE _____

ITCH
CHECKED IN A JIFFY

Sufferers from the torturing itch caused by eczema, pimples, scales, scabies, athlete's foot, "factory" itch, and other itch troubles are praising cooling, liquid D. D. D. Prescription. This time-proved medication—developed by Dr. D. D. Dennis—positively relieves that cruel, burning itch. Greaseless and stainless. Soothes and comforts even the most intense itching in a jiffy. A 35c trial bottle proves its merits or your money back. Ask your druggist today for D. D. D. Prescription.

INVENTORS

Learn now—without obligation—how to protect and sell your invention. Secure Free "Patent Guide," containing complete information about patent procedure and selling inventions. Write

CLARENCE A. O'BRIEN & HARVEY JACOBSON
Registered Patent Attorneys
68-C Adams Building • Washington 4, D. C.

ADVERTISING — PUBLICITY

You can learn this fascinating, profitable business AT HOME! Open your own office. FREE APTITUDE TEST. WRITE TODAY. Advertisers' Training Service, Dept. T3. 420 Market Street, San Francisco 11, California.

BE A BAKER Learn at Home

National Baking School announces their home study course in commercial baking. Baking is now one of America's high industries in wages. Not a seasonable business, but year-'round good field for trained and experienced men. If you have the desire and aptitude, send for FREE Booklet, "Opportunities in Commercial Baking."

NATIONAL BAKING SCHOOL
1315 S. Michigan • Ave. Dept. 1803 • Chicago 5, Ill.

distance. Gray Eagle glanced up at the gray sky, watched the clouds, and at last spoke in a whisper.

"Happy Flower? Is she happy in the presence of the Great Spirit?"

"She is very happy," Buffalo Billy answered solemnly. "The Great Spirit will send her back, but she will not come alone."

"No one returns from the Happy Hunting Ground." Gray Eagle contradicted sternly.

"You will touch me, my red brothers," Billy Bates said gently. "Am I spirit or flesh?"

Gray Eagle reached out a faltering hand and touched the white hunter on the shoulder. Then his fingers tightened, and Billy Bates swelled his muscles. The Shaman stiffened, and then nodded his head emphatically.

"You have returned from the Happy Hunting Ground," he agreed.

"The Great Spirit was angry," Billy Bates continued. "He guided Happy Flower to the young brave, Little Otter."

"It cannot be," Gray Eagle declared with firmness, and he shook his head vigorously. "Happy Flower will never return!"

"She will return!" Billy Bates repeated. "The Great Spirit has spoken, and he will send her back with Little Otter!"

"I am getting old," Gray Eagle said slowly, but there was a simple dignity in his fine features. "Little Otter always listened carefully to my words until he began to wander. He made many canoes, and acted very strangely."

"His medicine is strong," Bates prompted. "Little Otter would make a great Shaman."

Gray Eagle stared at the fire with dreamy, half-closed eyes. At last he spoke, and his voice was strong and vibrant with promise.

"If Little Otter returns with Happy Flower, he will succeed me as Shaman of our tribe. I have spoken!"

"Perhaps not," Billy Bates said quietly.

"I have spoken!" Gray Eagle repeated sternly.

"If he returns, it is the will of the Great Spirit that Happy Flower should be his bride," Billy Bates murmured.

Gray Eagle started and sat up straight. Then he stared at a tall brave who had been listening attentively. The medicine man addressed the young brave.

"You have heard, Running Wolf. You Yourself offered Happy Flower as sacrifice to the Great Spirit who dwells in the Flying Horse!"

"It is true," Running Wolf agreed. "Happy Flower has gone to the Happy Hunting Ground, and I will choose another young squaw for my bride."

"But if Happy Flower returns?" Gray Eagle murmured.

"You have spoken," Running Wolf answered quietly. "But she will not return."

Billy Bates lapsed into silence. He watched the squaws prepare the meat, watched in silence as the hungry Navajos ate the simple meal. He would tell them that there was game aplenty in the lower valley where Lost River emerged from the forbidden canyon. The rains would bring out the green grass, and the Indian corn would grow again.

Buffalo Billy Bates put out a hand and stared at the leaden sky. A drop of moisture fell on his palm, and Bates smiled when the thunderheads knocked together back in the high mountains.

Gray Eagle watched Billy Bates, and then he too put out his hand. A drop of rain struck his palm, and the old medicine man galvanized to activity. He picked up a stick and began to beat a tom-tom which he held between his knees.

"Pom, to-ta-tum-to ta tum to-ta-tum!"

The Navajos sprang to their feet and began to dance as the old medicine man beat out the rhythm. A gust of wind stirred the fire and brought a few vagrant drops of moisture from the clouds high above the mesa.

Billy Bates watched for a time, and as the dance gathered more followers, he stood erect and raised his right hand high above his head. Then he sat down to wait.

Now the rain was falling in a cool gentle mist. The thunderheads jarred together in the back reaches of the timbered mountains. Gray Eagle sped up the timing on his drum, and Running Wolf led the dance around the leaping flames.

An old squaw threw branches from a deadfall on the fire, and the flames leaped high. Buffalo Billy Bates turned his head and spoke in a loud ringing voice.

"The Great Spirit sends a sign!"

The old Shaman faltered and stopped beating the tom-tom. The dancers turned slowly to see what had caused the drum to stop. Then they stared at a couple who were coming within the range of the firelight.

A TALL Indian brave with the pelt of an otter hanging between his shoulders

(Concluded on page 96)

Appear SLIMMER
Look YOUNGER
Feel BETTER
Instantly!

Don't let them talk about your "Bay Window"—stay slenderized with this amazing free-action, ever comfortable, elastic woven garment!

"INTERLOCKING HANDS"
Sensational NEW PRINCIPLE
of Abdominal Support

Clasp hands over abdomen, as in picture—raise and press gently—notice how much better you feel! Sturdy non-stretch fabric is BUILT IN with the stretchy weave of the Commander for EXTRA DOUBLE SUPPORT across the abdomen. Instantly the Commander flattens your "Corporation"—BRACES YOUR BACK—improves your appearance!

TRY IT 10 DAYS AT OUR EXPENSE

Send coupon—wear the Commander TEN DAYS AT OUR EXPENSE—If you do not get all the results you expect, return it and YOUR MONEY WILL BE REFUNDED.

MAIL COUPON NOW

Ward Green Company, Dept. L-293
113 W. 57th St., New York 19, N. Y.

Send me Commander Supporter for Free Trial. I will pay postman $2.98 plus postage. (Sizes 28 to 47.) If not satisfied I may return it in 10 days and get money back. (Sizes 48 to 60, $3.98.)

My Waist Measures.....My Height.....

Name .....

Address .....

If $2.98 is enclosed with order, we pay postage charges. ☐ Check here.

Help Kidneys If Back Aches

Do you feel older than you are or suffer from Getting Up Nights, Backache, Nervousness, Leg Pains, Dizziness, Swollen Ankles, Rheumatic Pains, Burning, scanty or frequent passages? If so, remember that your Kidneys are vital to your health and that these symptoms may be due to non-organic and non-systemic Kidney and Bladder troubles—in such cases Cystex (a physician's prescription) usually gives prompt and joyous relief by helping the Kidneys flush out poisonous excess acids and wastes. Get Cystex from your druggist today. Take it exactly as directed and see the results in your own particular case. Under our guarantee unless completely satisfied you simply return the empty package and get your money back. So get Cystex today. Three guaranteed sizes: Only 35c, 75c, $1.50 at your druggist.

Cystex
Helps Flush Kidneys

DETECTIVES

TRAINING—SECRET INVESTIGATIONS—FINGER PRINTS
Easy Method—Short Time. Home—Travel—Secret. Code-Booklet FREE—WRITE, INTERNATIONAL DETECTIVE SYSTEM, 1701-T Monroe St., N. E., Washington, D. C. 18.

BE A Nurse

MAKE $25-$35 A WEEK

Practical nurses are needed in every community... doctors rely on them... patients appreciate their cheerful, expert care. You can learn practical nursing at home in spare time. Course endorsed by physicians. 47th yr. Earn while learning. High School not required. Men, women, 18 to 60. Trial plan. Write now!

CHICAGO SCHOOL OF NURSING
Dept. 422, 100 East Ohio Street, Chicago 11, Ill.
Please send free booklet and 16 sample lesson pages.
Name.....
City.....State.....Age.....

When the deputy reached the jail he dismounted, pulled the raging ex-convict from the saddle and prodded him ahead

SHERIFF SIGN

By MEL PITZER

The quick-thinking power of old Sheriff Bill Browder is a weapon in the hands of his deputy, "Chuck" Hartley!

WITH a weary sigh, Sheriff Bill Browder pushed a veined brown hand through his heavy shock of gray hair, arose and went around his desk to the window across the room. He always had a look of worry stamped on his lantern-jawed aged face, and now as he stared out at the cowtown of Big Stream, and watched its people going to and fro, he told himself, as he had a thousand times before, that he was going to hand in his star. He was going to get a place high in the mountains, he had decided, where he could lay around without a worry on his mind. There would be no complaints from irate citizens, no riding all over the country after outlaws or trying to appease ranchers by settling their small troubles. Peace was all that he wanted.

Yes, a thousand times Sheriff Browder had promised himself this and still he knew it was just a dream. For although he got satisfaction out of thinking of retirement, he knew that he would serve the people as long as he could. For after thirty years of sheriffing he had become molded to his job, and he knew it. But he was sixty now, and at that age a man begins to think of rest.

Across the street the darkness was swept away by the small bright bulbs of the theatre which proclaimed itself the opera house. There had not been such things as electric lights in Big Stream, or even an opera house, when Bill Browder had first become sheriff. But there were a lot of new things now.

Even guns were not the same. A man could be shot with them these day, without a single boom.

The last show was over, and the lights went out. The sheriff saw a horseman ride up and dismount at the hitch-rack before his office. The rider pushed the door open and strode in.

He was a big fellow, with gorilla-like shoulder, and a face like a bulldog's—that is, it was all jaw, with nothing much that could be called a nose. The man was "Chuck" Hartley, the sheriff's deputy. Chuck's looks would never win him a beauty contest award, but when it came to an understanding of humanity, or giving a helping hand to the deserving, Chuck was right there. He was also as feared as a plague by those outside the law.

AS CHUCK nodded to the sheriff, a frown of anxiety was on his face. He flung a thick envelope on the desk.

"There's yore reward posters for some new owlhooters, Bill," he said, "and the rest of them report forms and other papers yuh wanted from the county seat. Besides, I brought along some news that don't set so well. Last week Ike Paue and Bud Zanner finished their terms at Yuma and were let out. This week Three-Fingered Lewis and Kid Bullen paid their debts to society and said good-by to Deer Lodge. Marshal Kingston told me to remind yuh that a couple of 'em swore they'd get yuh when they hit the open trails again."

"Yeah, Chuck," answered the lawman. "I recall 'em. I'll keep my eyes peeled. Yuh had a long ride, so yuh'd better get home and get some shut-eye. I'll look over that stuff yuh brought."

Chuck pushed his big Stetson back on his head, said good night, and went out.

Sheriff Browder lowered himself into the swivel chair and opened the envelope his deputy had brought. Though he was tired, he became so engrossed in the reward posters and other papers in front of him that he did not realize how late it was until a clock on a shelf chimed twelve.

The lawman stretched himself, and though his brain cried for rest, he went on with his examination of the documents. Time passed swiftly. One o'clock chimed, then two, before Browder gathered up his papers and put them away in a drawer.

He leaned back in his chair and closed his eyes to relieve them from the strain they had been under. But his brain also de-

[*Turn page*]

WHICH OF THESE *Opportunities* INTERESTS *You* MOST?

● *Today*, choose the job you want—and prepare for it. Or if you are already engaged in the work you like best, start training *now* for quicker promotion. Acquire the knowledge that will help you to get ahead faster, make more money and have greater security.

American School, founded in 1897 as an educational institution *not for profit*, can help you to reach your goal just as it has helped others during the past forty-nine years. Check the coupon at right, add your name and address and mail it at once. The school will send you details on its training plan and outline of study prepared by specialists. There is no charge, no obligation, so send the coupon immediately.

AMERICAN SCHOOL

Dept. G358, Drexel at 58th Street, Chicago 37.

CHECK, CLIP AND MAIL COUPON NOW

AMERICAN SCHOOL, Dept. G358, Drexel at 58th, Chicago 37, Ill.

Without obligation, Please send FREE and postpaid, bulletin and details of the Subject checked.

- ☐ PLASTICS ENG'R
- ☐ Refrigeration
- ☐ Architecture and Building
- ☐ Contracting
- ☐ Practical Plumbing
- ☐ Automotive Engr.
- ☐ Aviation Drafting
- ☐ Aviation
- ☐ Business Mngment.
- ☐ Railway Training
- ☐ Accounting and C.P.A.
- ☐ Electrical Engr.
- ☐ Electricity—Pract.
- ☐ Electronics, Industrial
- ☐ Bookkeeping
- ☐ Private Secretary
- ☐ Diesel Engineering
- ☐ Surveying & Topographical Drafting
- ☐ Sheet Metal Pattern Drafting
- ☐ Drafting and Design for Men and Women
- ☐ Radio
- ☐ High School
- ☐ Air Conditioning
- ☐ Mechanical Eng.
- ☐ Shop Management
- ☐ Tool Making
- ☐ Better Foremanship
- ☐ Machine Shop Operations

NAME ..... OCCUPATION .....

ADDRESS ..... AGE .....

CITY ..... STATE .....

Learn this Profitable Profession

IN 90 DAYS AT HOME

MONEY-MAKING CAREER OPEN to MEN and WOMEN, 18 to 50

Hundreds of men and women between 18 and 50 make $10 to $20 in a single day giving Scientific Swedish Massage and Hydro-Therapy treatments. There is big demand from doctors, hospitals, sanatoriums and clubs. Graduates earn large full time incomes from these or in private practice in their own offices. Others make good money from home treatments given in spare time. Learn this interesting, money-making profession in your own home, through our home study course. Same instructors as in our nationally known resident school. You can win independence and prepare for future security by qualifying for our Diploma. Course can be completed in 3 to 4 months. Many earn while they learn. Begin your training at once.

Anatomy Charts & Booklet FREE

Enroll now and we will include, at no extra cost, many needed supplies. Fit yourself to help meet growing demand for massage now and after the war. Send the coupon at once for complete details. Anatomy Charts and 32-page Illustrated Booklet. FREE, postpaid.

THE COLLEGE OF SWEDISH MASSAGE
Dept. 663C, 100 East Ohio St., Chicago, Illinois

Please send me FREE and postpaid, Anatomy Charts, 32-page Booklet and complete details on Home Training.

Name.....

Address.....

City.....State.....

High School Course at Home — Many Finish in 2 Years

Go as rapidly as your time and abilities permit. Course equivalent to resident school work—prepares for college entrance exams. Standard H.S. texts supplied. Diploma. Credit for H. S. subjects already completed. Single subjects if desired. High school education is very important for advancement in business and industry and socially. Don't be handicapped all your life. Be a High School graduate. Start your training now. Free Bulletin on request. No obligation.

American School, Dept. H-358, Drexel at 58th, Chicago 37

BE A DETECTIVE

WORK HOME or TRAVEL. Experience unnecessary. **DETECTIVE** Particulars FREE. Write to **GEO. H. R. WAGNER**, 125 W. 86th St., N. Y.

OLD LEG TROUBLE

Easy to use Viscose Method heals many old leg sores caused by leg congestion, varicose veins, swollen legs and injuries or no cost for TRIAL. Describe your trouble and get FREE BOOK.

T. G. VISCOSE METHOD COMPANY
140 N. Dearborn Street, Chicago, Illinois

RUPTURED?

Get Relief This Proven Way

Why try to worry along with trusses that gouge your flesh—press heavily on hips and spine—enlarge opening—fail to hold rupture? You need the Cluthe. No leg-straps or cutting belts. Automatic adjustable pad holds at real opening—follows every body movement with instant increased support in case of strain. Cannot slip whether at work or play. Light. Waterproof. Can be worn in bath. Send for amazing FREE book. "Advice To Ruptured," and details of liberal truthful 60-day trial offer. Also endorsements from grateful users in your neighborhood. Write:

Cluthe Sons, Dept. 33, Bloomfield, New Jersey

manded rest, and soon the sheriff was sound asleep.

He awakened suddenly when he felt a grip on his shoulder. Someone was shaking him. The sheriff sat up, and as he blinked the sleep from his eyes he saw that dawn was coming through the windows. Then he turned his face and saw the man who stood beside him. He saw a white, thin, bony visage above a long, scraggly neck. All that looked alive about the face were the two black glittering eyes boring into the sheriff's own.

The lawman spoke two words.

"Ike Paue!"

He dropped his hand swiftly to his holster, but that holster, he found, was empty. The thin lips split open in the bony face above him.

"Recognize yore old pard, do yuh, Browder?" the man said. "Shore it's Ike Paue. I've come back to pay a debt I owe yuh, one I made when yuh slammed me in the hoosegow, where I had to wait to be dragged away to Yuma. Remember? I said then I'd have yore life—and I will!"

A gun was in Paue's right hand, the tip of its barrel jamming into the sheriff's side.

"When they let me out, Browder," he went on, "my first stop was here. I've been thinkin' of yuh night and day, because I've been tastin' yore blood all the months I've been in prison."

"But takin' revenge on me, Ike, won't git yuh nothin'," the lawman said grimly. "Why don't yuh go on yore way and try to be a decent citizen? Yuh won't gain nothin' by havin' my blood on yore hands."

The outlaw's chuckle was harsh. "Papa Browder, he's giving a word of advice, is that it? Well, cuss yuh and yore advice. Nobody's goin' to find out that I come back here and drilled yuh. There ain't a soul who's goin' to figger out that a gent like me, who's been in prison, is goin' to do anything that'll put him back there right away. But I'm goin' to fool the Law, and everybody else. This gun I got has a silencer on it. There won't be any noise, which will give me a chance to be home long before yore body is found. I'll stick yore own gun in yore hand and let the Law figger things if they can."

The sheriff knew that his time was about up. Gradually he brought his feet under the chair, to fling himself at the outlaw in a last desperate effort. Then he heard a low bark,

and felt the shock of something hitting him in the side. Paue had fired!

The breath was knocked out of the sheriff, and his body was spilled half out of the chair. Another bark, and another shock smashed into his chest. He crashed to the floor, his body numb, his senses reeling. But he was conscious of a gun-butt being thrust into his hand, and heard the slam of a door.

After that came the pound of fading hoofs, then silence, except for his own hard breathing. Wreaths of gunsmoke hung in the room like a death pall.

BROWDER tried to move, and found he could use his arms. But his body below the hips was paralyzed and a fire burned in his chest with every breath he took. Air was what he wanted—air!

Painfully he began to drag himself to an open window. But when he reached it, the chill air didn't cool the searing in his lungs. He coughed, and a spray of blood came from his lips, trickling down his chin.

Browder knew he was dying! He was going to do what he had always dreamed of doing—rest. It would be peace, but an unknown peace.

Pain began to rack his chest, unbearably, but he managed to pull himself shoulder-high to the window sill. There seemed to be a mist over his eyes as he looked out into the street, plainly seen now in swiftly approaching dawn. And only one thought was in his mind. Ike Paue had made his threat good, but Browder knew that he must leave a message for big Deputy Chuck Hartley. Chuck must somehow know that Paue had killed him. Chuck would get Ike Paue.

The old lawman was sinking, getting weaker fast. There was no one outside to whom he could call. Each breath a horrible gasp now, but of a sudden a faint smile touched his gray face.

He still held the gun which Paue had shoved into his hand. Dimly, he remembered that there was another hanging in a holster from a clothes-rack right beside him.

With a great effort he pulled it out in easy stages, as his weakness began to take hold swiftly. At last he managed to rest it on the sill beside the other gun. With a film fast covering his eyes, he pulled back the hammers of the gun and began to fire them until, like a great ship that has weathered a storm and no longer is able to battle wind

[*Turn page*]

Earns Living Writing — Before Finishing Course

"I have always had the desire to write. I saw your ad, borrowed the money to pay for the course. Before finishing your course, I had become self-supporting as a correspondent for the state papers. I believe that if anyone wants to be a writer and will apply himself to your course, he will soon know whether his living is coming out of the writing market." — Edward Foster, Talihina, Okla.

Why Can't You Write?

It's much simpler than you think!

So many people with the "germ" of writing in them simply can't get started. They suffer from inertia. Or they set up imaginary barriers to taking the first step.

Many are convinced the field is confined to persons gifted with a genius for writing.

Few realize that the great bulk of commercial writing is done by so-called "unknowns." Not only do these thousands of men and women produce most of the fiction published, but countless articles on business affairs, home and shop crafts, local and club activities, travel, sports, home-making, etc., as well.

Such material is in constant demand. Every week thousands of check for $25, $50 and $100 go out to writers whose latent ability was perhaps no greater than yours.

The Practical Method

Newspaper work demonstrates that the way to learn to write is by writing! Newspaper copy desk editors waste no time on theories or ancient classics. The *story* is the thing. Every copy "cub" goes through the course of practical criticism—a training that turns out more successful authors than any other experience.

That is why Newspaper Institute of America bases its writing instruction on the Copy Desk Method. It starts and keeps you writing in your own home, on your own time. And upon the very same kind of *actual assignments* given daily to metropolitan reporters. Thus you learn by *doing*, not by studying the individual styles of model authors.

Each week your work is analyzed constructively by practical writers. Gradually they help to clarify your own *distinctive* style. Writing soon becomes easy, absorbing. Profitable, too, as you gain the "professional" touch that gets your material accepted by editors. Above all, you can see constant progress week by week as your faults are corrected and your writing ability grows.

Have You Natural Ability?

Our Writing Aptitude Test will reveal whether or not you have natural talent for writing. It will analyze your powers of observation, your imagination and dramatic instinct. You'll enjoy taking this test. There is no cost or obligation. Simply mail the coupon below, today. Newspaper Institute of America, One Park Avenue, New York 16, N. Y. (Founded 1925)

NOTICE TO CANADIANS

Newspaper Institute's operations in Canada have been approved by the Foreign Exchange Control Board. To facilitate all financial transactions, a special permit has been assigned to their account with The Canadian Bank of Commerce Montreal.

Free

Newspaper Institute of America,
One Park Avenue, New York 16, N. Y.

Send me, without cost or obligation, your *Writing Aptitude Test* and further information about writing for profit.

Mr. }
Mrs. } .....
Miss }

Address .....

(All correspondence confidential. No salesman will call on you.) 94-C-506

Copyright 1946, Newspaper Institute of America.

THIS EASY WAY TEACHES PIANO Without Music!

You May Play Any Song in 10 Days without being Able to Read a Note . . .

If you want to quickly learn how to play the piano . . . If you want to play song hits, waltzes, marches, hymns, two steps, red hot numbers and western songs, like "Don't Fence Me In"...here's amazing news. Now at last Mr. Dave Minor has perfected a wonderfully easy play-by-ear piano course that must teach you piano playing in only ten quick days or no cost. No scales, no long exercises. You start playing songs from the first lesson, and so soon it's amazing you're playing the piano surprisingly well. Mr. Minor's course is complete. It contains all the pictures, all the instruction, everything you need. The complete course sent for your inspection, trial and approval.

SEND NO MONEY

Make This Conclusive 10 Day Test

Just send your name and address today. On arrival deposit $1.49 plus postage through postman. There is nothing more to pay. Inspect course carefully, see how simple yet thorough it is. Follow it for 10 days. Then if you aren't actually playing the piano and playing it well, if you aren't entirely satisfied and delighted with your discovery, return the course and get your money back. Piano playing is more popular than ever. DON'T WAIT BUT WRITE TODAY! If you act now you will receive without extra cost the wonderful, big 72 page Dave Minor piano song book of 50 songs. You quickly learn to play the songs the Dave Minor method or money back. Get in on this 2 FOR 1 offer NOW.

2 for 1 OFFER ONLY $1.49 COMPLETE

DAVE MINOR, Room 15-D, 230 E. Ohio St., Chicago 11, Ill.

USED Correspondence Courses

Complete HOME-STUDY COURSES and self-instruction textbooks, slightly used. Rented, sold, exchanged. All subjects. 10th year. Catalog Free. Cash paid for used courses. Full details & 100 page illustrated bargain catalog Free. Write Nelson Co., 1139 S. Wabash Av., Dept. 2-O6, Chicago 5, Ill.

When PRAYER FAILS

The prayers of the most worthy people often fail. Why? The unworthy often have the greatest health, success, riches and happiness. The best, smartest, and most industrious people often have only pain, poverty and sorrow. Why? Thirty years ago, in Forbidden Tibet, behind the highest mountains in the world, a young Englishman found the answers to these questions. His eyes were opened by the strangest mystic he met during his twenty-one years of travels in the Far East. Sick then, he regained health. Poor then, he acquired wealth and world-wide professional honors. He wants to tell the whole world what he learned, and offers to send a 9,000-word treatise, FREE, to everyone who asks promptly. It is a first step to the POWER that KNOWLEDGE gives. There is no obligation. Write for YOUR FREE COPY today.

INSTITUTE of MENTALPHYSICS, Dept. U-138
213 South Hobart Blvd., Los Angeles 4, Calif.

and wave and sinks, Sheriff Bill Browder's body suddenly relaxed and he slid to the floor—dead!

Almost instantly there came a pound of running feet as people headed for the sheriff's office. The first to reach the place was big Chuck Hartley. He leaped to the porch and burst inside, kneeling beside the sheriff. But in a single glance he saw that Browder was dead.

Chuck swung around as others began to barge into the room. He flung quick orders.

"The sheriff's dead! A couple of you boys get the doctor and somebody go for the coroner. The rest of yuh get out of here."

Chuck pushed them outside, closed and locked the door. Grimly he began to study the room. He strode cautiously around, looking for anything that might offer a clue, but nothing came under his scrutiny that would help him. When he stood beside the body of the sheriff again, the crowd was milling around outside the window.

"What happened, Chuck?" a freckled-faced range-garbed young fellow called. "How'd he get killed?"

"Don't bother me with questions, Spud," answered the deputy. "I got a trail to run down and I ain't got no time to answer questions."

Chuck picked up the two Colts that lay on the broad window sill and studied them carefully, but they told him nothing.

"Come on, anybody who wants a better look inside," he heard the voice of the inquisitive "Spud" call. "Let's climb up the fire-escape next to the movie house!"

The puncher, with three others, dashed across the street and soon were hanging from the fire-escape ladder.

"Hey, Chuck!" called the persistent Spud. "Is that Browder's body I see layin' there?"

Chuck Hartley raised his eyes to the young waddy.

"Are yuh goin' to be a doggone pest, Spud?" he bellowed. "Are yuh goin' to keep on annoyin' me, when I don't know no more than—"

The deputy stopped short, put down the guns he had been holding and, swinging around, went out the door and across the street. Spud hastily descended, moving away.

"Hey, now, are yuh goin' to get sore 'cause I asked a couple questions?" he cried.

Chuck paid no attention to him, but went on into the theatre.

It was some fifteen minutes later when the

deputy, astride a great black horse, rode at a swinging gallop out of town. Upon his face was a thunderous scowl and his jaw was set grimly.

Ike Paue had been sent to prison because he had given enough whisky to a ranch foreman to make the man drunk and then, with crooked cards, had taken away the money the foreman was carrying for the sale of cattle. The victim had accused him of it and Paue had shot him. The foreman's charges had been proved, though, and Paue had gone to jail, but the victim had been crippled for life.

PAUE had a house in Big Stream, a half-mile outside of town, and he was still part owner of a saloon in the cowtown. It was reasonable to suppose that he would return to Big Stream openly, once he had served his term. So Chuck pulled his black horse to a halt before the sagging fence of Paue's house, slid from saddle and, mounting the veranda, pounded on the door.

At last he heard the faint muttering of a voice coming closer, and the door was pulled screechingly open. The bony face of Paue looked out at Chuck, the man's black eyes bleary from sleep.

"I just get home and into a good sleep," growled Paue, "and somebody wakes me up. What yuh want, Chuck Hartley?"

For a moment Chuck was taken back by the man's calm poise, but he quickly recovered.

"Sheriff Browder has been killed, Paue—murdered!" he said shortly. "That's what I came to tell yuh about."

Paue's eyes opened wide, boring into Chuck's.

"What has that to do with me?" he said. "I just got out of prison. I did my time. I got my papers with me from the warden and they're in good order. Are yuh goin' to start houndin' me already, Hartley? If yuh think yuh are, there'll shore be trouble. I'm goin' to have protection from yuh, I am."

"Paue," retorted the deputy, "it sounds good, but it don't go. Yuh ain't goin' to go peaceable, so I better talk more about it with yuh when yuh come back."

"When I come back?" blurted the jailbird. "Why, I ain't goin' no place. Where would I be goin', I'm askin' yuh?"

"To sleep," spat Hartley, between his set teeth, as a fist flashed up and hammered into Paue's face.

The blow flung the man into a slithering

[*Turn page*]

Get Ready QUICK

FOR PEACETIME FUTURE!

ELECTRICITY HUNDREDS OF BRANCHES

2 GREAT POSTWAR FIELDS

"Learn-by-Doing"
12 WEEKS AT COYNE
(for Either Course)

OR **RADIO-ELECTRONICS-TELEVISION** etc.

I'll Finance Your Training

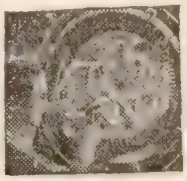
Prepare for the future with ALL AROUND TRAINING in a field that offers steady work after final Victory. Come to COYNE in Chicago and be ready 12 weeks from now! If you are short of money, I'll finance most of your training and you can pay for it after you graduate.

Train on Actual Equipment!

Whether you've had previous experience or not, makes no difference at Coyne. You do real work on full-size equipment. 46 years of success.

ELECTRICITY

A permanent necessity in war or peace. Big future in Power Plant Work, Motors, Armature Winding, Home and Factory Wiring, Appliances, Air Conditioning, Refrigeration, Maintenance, Illumination, etc. Electricians are in demand everywhere—lifetime job service without charge. Many earn while learning. Send for BIG FREE BOOK with dozens of photos of my shops.



RADIO-ELECTRONICS

A great field now, even greater growth ahead. Here at COYNE you're trained for Construction, Operation, Trouble-Shooting on Radio Receivers, Public Address Systems, Sound Picture Units, FM, Photo-cell Controls, Television. My training is quick, easy, practical. Many Coyne trained men own well-paying radio businesses of their own.

VETERANS Coyne is also equipped to train those who qualify under the G. I. Bill of Rights. Check coupon.

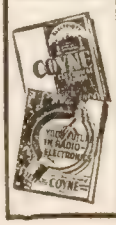
INDUSTRIAL ELECTRONICS and Electric-Refrigeration

This training means additional opportunities. Extra training in these subjects now offered without extra cost with Electrical or Radio training.

MAIL COUPON FOR FACTS!

See how I make it EASY for you to get ready NOW. Check course you prefer and rush coupon to me for full details, FREE. No obligation—no salesman will call. Do it TODAY. We also have facilities for men with physical disabilities due to war or other causes. Check coupon for details.

Pick Your Field—Get Book Free



H. C. LEWIS, Pres.,
COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL
500 S. Paulina St., Dept. 26-84K, Chicago 12, Ill.

Send me your BIG FREE BOOK—for the course checked below. Also full details of your "Pay-After-Graduation" plan.

☐ Electricity ☐ Radio-Electronics ☐ Send G. I. Bulletin ☐ Physical Disability

Name.....

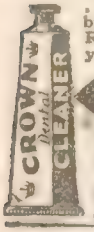
Address.....

City.....State.....

TAKES THE
"CLACK"
Out of
FALSE TEETH

CROWN DENTAL
PLATE FASTENER

Here's new amazing mouth comfort! Enjoy that feeling of security . . . of having your own teeth again. Satisfy your desire for all foods. Stop suffering the embarrassment and discomfort caused by "clacking" dental plates! CROWN RELINER is applied directly from the tube and in a jiffy your plates fit as snug as new. One application will last up to 4 months. CROWN RELINER is guaranteed . . . it's harmless . . . it's tasteless . . . natural color . . . does NOT burn or irritate. Remember CROWN RELINER costs you nothing unless you're satisfied.



CLEANER FREE with your order

CROWN RELINER keeps dental plates fresh and clean at all times. Write today. Send $1.00 for your CROWN RELINER and receive CLEANER FREE. You MUST be satisfied or money back!

CROWN PLASTIC CO., Dept. 6403
4358 W. Philadelphia Ave., Detroit 4, Mich.

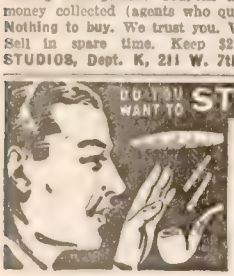
MOTHERS

Medi-Sweet *Cough Syrup* is especially compounded for children. Quickly allays coughs due to colds. Helps soothe raw, irritated bronchial membranes; makes phlegm easier to raise. It tastes good. Children love it! Get Medi-Sweet at your drug store. Also ask to see 9 other Medi-Sweet Preparations made especially for infants and children up to 12 years. They *taste* good—*feel* good—*are* good!

MEDI-SWEET
COUGH SYRUP
CHILDREN'S PHARMACAL COMPANY
308 W. Washington St. • Chicago 6, Ill.

EASY MONEY FOR YOU

Quick Cash for you Selling Enlargement Coupons at 25c each and keeping ⅓ of the money collected (agents who qualify make up to $3.75 per book)—Nothing to buy. We trust you. Write today for book of 16 Coupons. Sell in spare time. Keep $2.00 cash. MOVYLAND PICTURE STUDIOS, Dept. K, 211 W. 7th St., Des Moines, Iowa.



Banish the craving for tobacco as thousands have. Make yourself free and happy with Tobacco Redeemer. Write for free booklet telling of injurious effect of tobacco and of a treatment which has relieved many men.

30 Years in Business

FREE BOOK

THE NEWELL COMPANY
153 Clayton Sta., St. Louis, Mo.

heap on the hall floor. Chuck stepped in, lifted the senseless man in the crook of his arm and strode out to his waiting horse. He tossed Paue into the saddle, then pulled the man's hands behind his back and snapped bright steel cuffs over his wrists and roped his body.

Then mounting behind Paue, Chuck rode back to town. Just before they entered it, the ex-convict regained his senses and began to swear. The crowd, still hanging around the sheriff's office, saw them and came running up. In the lead was the freckle-faced Spud.

"Look here!" he called out. "Chuck has gone and brung in that crook, Paue, the one that was sent to Yuma a long time ago. Hey, Chuck, where'd yuh get him?"

The deputy made no answer, but rode on until he passed the sheriff's office and reached the jail next door to it. There he dismounted and dragged the raging Paue out of the saddle.

"It's a frame-up!" screamed the ex-convict. "Yuh can't take me in for killin' Browder. I served my time! Yuh ain't pinnin' the sheriff's killin' on me!"

"Ain't I?" replied Hartley, his voice terrible with accusations. Then he turned and faced the townspeople. "This here Paue," he thundered, "murdered Sheriff Browder and you citizens are goin' to be told how, if yuh don't know already. Yuh probably remember that the sheriff's body was layin' by the window. And there's a lot of yuh who heard shootin' and saw the gunsmoke by the window there he was firin' out of. I saw it when I was runnin' down to see what it was all about."

There was a chorus of agreement, and shouted inquiries.

"The sheriff," continued the deputy, "wanted to let me know who his killer was and he done just that before he died. While I was standin' by his body in the office, tryin' to figger out the thing, Spud there yelled to me. When I looked over at him, hangin' on the fire-escape ladder of the movie house, I saw somethin' else. To make shore, I went over to the show house and had a good look. Yuh see the word 'OPERA HOUSE' over there?"

The crowd turned to look, as Chuck went on:

"Look at that there letter P. A couple of the bulbs are smashed in it. And a couple are busted in the A and U and E. Bullets done that. The sheriff's bullets broke them

bulbs. It was the only way he could tell me who his killer was. Yuh see, the letters banged out spell P A U E, plain as day. Anybody who wants to, can see the bullets sunk into the wood around them broken bulbs. . . Now, Paue, get movin' for your next stretch behind bars."

And Chuck Hartley pushed a white-faced, frightened Ike Paue ahead of him into the jail.

THE HOME CORRAL

(Continued from page 10)

yearly, they tell me.

Up from the vicinity of Gold Beach twisty roads follow the river, one about six miles up, the other ten. These reach the magnificent steelhead riffles—Canfield, Hunt Creek, Kimble, Gillespie and Lobster Creek. A mail launch runs up-river 32 miles to a place called Agness, which consists of a tavern, post-office and store, where there's other riffles seldom fished.

The mail launch take sightseers. It's a trip you won't forget. A craft about 30 feet long fights the current and bucks rapids you'd swear no craft could climb. It has a propeller that can be raised by a lever in shallow water. Even then the bottom grates gravel.

Ranchers along the river have landings and mail boxes. They get the bulk of their supplies by mail boat. Livestock is ferried down at high water on pontoons.

The history of this country, as the white man remembers, is only 90 years old. Fort Wedderburn stood at the river's mouth, opposite where Gold Beach is now. In the 50's settlers flocked to the Wedderburn stockade, when the Rogue River Indians were at war.

Expert Guides

The Indians are a part of the back-country community now—rivermen, ranchers, guides. They're clean-featured, fine-looking, friendly people. Plenty of expert, licensed fishing and hunting guides along the lower Rogue.

I haven't met up with 'em all, but I've been impressed by the courtesy of the Owen boys, as they come along with a boatload of fishing dudes, the considerate way they treat bank fishermen and give a friendly hail in passing. Rand Messervey, up at Lowry's Ranch halfway to Agness, is also popular with all comers.

One of the most picturesque residents thereabouts is Frank Colvin, 50 years on the Rogue. Runs a sports goods store at Gold Beach and hands out valuable advice. Not uncommon to find Frank's place locked up and sign on the door, "gone fishing."

He's about the best fly fisherman on the

(Turn page)

ACCUMULATED CASH! Policy pays for accidental loss of life, limb or sight up to $4,000, accumulated to $6000.00

ACCIDENT BENEFITS! Policy pays for accident disability at rate up to $100 per month, for as long as 24 months, or $2400.00

SICKNESS BENEFITS! Policy pays for loss of time due to sickness, a regular monthly income for as long as 6 months, up to $100.00 PER MO.

PLUS *Hospitalization Plan!*

Pays $5 per day and other hospital expenses. For maternity up to $50. Sickness and accident, as specified, to over $650.00

Added millions can now afford all-round insurance protection. This policy, costing *actually less* than $1-a-month, issued by an old-line LEGAL RESERVE company, provides liberal amounts of QUICK CASH when sickness or accident strikes, to replace lost income, pay hospital, doctor bills, etc. Covers *any* and *all* accidents, *all* the common sicknesses. No waiting period for benefits!

NO MEDICAL EXAMINATION

required! No red tape! Policy issued BY MAIL at BIG SAVINGS. Ages 15 to 69. Actual Policy sent for 10 Days' FREE Examination. ACT NOW! Write for it today. No cost. No obligation. No salesman will call.

FREE 10-Day Inspection Coupon

THE SERVICE LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY
4467 Service Life Bldg. Omaha 2, Nebr.

Without cost or obligation, send your GOLD SEAL $1-A-MONTH Policy for 10 DAYS' FREE INSPECTION.

Name _____

Address _____ Age _____

City _____ State _____

Beneficiary _____

Now for EVERY WORK SHOP!
NEW Invention Electroplates by BRUSH

Easy to Plate CHROMIUM
GOLD, SILVER, NICKEL, COPPER
For Pleasure and Profit!
If you have a workshop—at home or in business—you need this new Warner Electroplater. At the stroke of an electrified brush, you can electroplate models and projects—you can replate worn articles, faucets, tools, fixtures, silverware, etc. with a durable, sparkling coat of metal . . . Gold, Silver, Chromium, Nickel, Copper or Cadmium. Method is easy, simple, quick. Everything furnished—equipment complete, ready for use. *By doing a bit of work for others, your machine can pay for itself within a week.* So make your shop complete by getting a Warner Electroplater right away. Send today for FREE SAMPLE and illustrated literature. ACT AT ONCE! *Mail Coupon.*
WARNER ELECTRIC CO., Dept. G-6
663 N. Wells St., Chicago 10, Illinois

FREE Details & Sample!
Warner Electric Co., 663 N. Wells St., Chicago 10, Dept. G-6
Gentlemen: Send Free Sample and Details to:
Name
Address
City State

Store Route Plan PAYS BIG MONEY
SELL COUNTER CARD PRODUCTS
Build a good-paying business of your own: Call on dealers of all kinds; show nationally-advertised Aspirin, Vitamins, Cosmetics and 200 other necessities. Big 5c and 10c retail packages. Fast quality. Attractive counter display sells goods fast. Free book gives amazing facts. Write!
World's Products Co., Dept. 73-X, Spencer, Ind.

LAW
STUDY AT HOME for PERSONAL SUCCESS and LARGER EARNINGS. 36 years expert instruction—over 108,000 students enrolled. LL.B. Degree awarded. All texts furnished. Easy payments. Send for FREE BOOK.
AMERICAN EXTENSION SCHOOL OF LAW
Dept. 63-T, 645 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago 11, Ill.

WHY WEAR DIAMONDS
When diamond-dazzling Zircons from the mines of far-away mystic Siam are so *effective and inexpensive!* Dazzling beauty, stand acid, true backs, full of FIRE! Exquisite mountings. See before you buy. Write for FREE catalog.
National Zircon Co., Dept. 4 Wheeling, W.Va.
Catalog FREE!

FREE ENLARGEMENT of your Favorite Photo
FROM FAMOUS HOLLYWOOD FILM STUDIOS
Just to get acquainted we will make a beautiful 5 x 7 enlargement of any picture or negative. Be sure to include color of hair, eyes and clothing and get our bargain offer for having your enlargement beautifully hand colored in oil and mounted in your choice of handsome frames. Please enclose 10c and your original picture or negative will be returned with the free 5 x 7 enlargement postpaid. Act now! Limit 2 to a customer.
HOLLYWOOD FILM STUDIOS
7021 Santa Monica Blvd., Dept. 865, Hollywood, Calif.

river and nearly every year takes a prize in some national big-fish contest. Took a 16-pound steelhead for tops last season.

For me, the thrill of a misspent life was to hook onto a salmon with fly tackle. Not just once, but several times. Not a hog-sized Chinook, which ain't interested in a wisp of bright feathers and hair on a Number 8 hook, but jack salmon. A jack is a young Chinook, visiting the river before he reaches maturity, as a spawner. Up to eight pounds, thick and powerful and stubborn as a mule.

Silverside salmon run in the river in late September. Above tidewater they occasionally hit a fly. They go to 20 pounds and account for a heap of lost tackle.

Down on the inlet salmon fishermen troll and jig from boats with outboard motors. They line up at the jaws of the inlet on the outgoing tide.

If an anchor line breaks, as sometimes happens in a strong tiderun, the nearby Coast Guard boys have a rescue job on their hands. For the surf roars just outside the jaws and there's white-crested reefs out beyond.

Some days are dull on the inlet. Then comes a leaping school of fish and excitement runs high at Joe Sidle's camp, facing the bay on the Wedderburn side, between the tall-arched highway bridge and the beach.

They say Joe savvies seagull talk, as they wheel and scream, giving news that a school of salmon are coming in.

Another character you're bound to meet is Jim Button, a transplanted Kentuckian who has a ranch back yonder at river road's end.

Jim, a genial soul, has a truck garden and apple orchard that yields more'n he can

use. Under appropriate arrangements, he turns you loose to pick what you need and says for gosh sakes whack down some of those danged blackberry vines that close in along the edges of his fields.

Wild Berries

Oregon is celebrated for wild berries. Here in "outlawland" they grow bigger and tastier than anywhere I know. Tons go to waste, unpicked.

Ranchers like Jim Button have a hard time keeping the brambles from spreading and taking charge of their premises. Lots

of huckleberries, too, on the up-trails. Deer, bear, cougar, grouse, mountain quail and a few elk keep company with the stock of a cattleman named Bowman, who grazes thereabouts.

Then there's a lone ex-schoolma'am, Missus Bailey, who runs a sheep ranch and scores of other interesting folks I wish there's was time to mention.

But this gives you an idea, hombres and hombresses, of this land o' plenty. Shut off as it is from the outside world, this "outlaw" region didn't feel the war's changes, except from news that trickled in by radio or from its sons in service. No humming war plants, such as up Portland way or down at San Francisco. But folks did keep eyes peeled for awhile for Jap landings on the lonely miles of beaches.

Luck for the Tojos they never came, because every household in Curry County has a loaded gun behind the door, I reckon. And those "outlaws" generally hit what they shoot at.

The south portion of Curry County, there begins the redwood belt, the tremendous trees, ages old, that spread down along the northern coast. I aim to tell you about the redwoods later on, and tell what you and I and others can do to save these noble giants from complete and merciless destruction by greedy, wealthy timber barons.

But for now, it's *adios* until our next get-together. Write in with your questions about "outlawland" or anything else you crave to know about Out West! And thanks for listening to my chatter.

—DOC LONG TRAIL.

OUR NEXT ISSUE

THERE are often times when the men of the rangeland can be identified by their headgear. A waddy pays a lot of attention to his hat. It has to protect him from the sun on blistering hot days—which is why the brim is usually wide enough to shade his face and neck. A waddy will pay from ten to sixty-five dollars for a hat that suits him.

It's a Mexican sombrero that plays an important part in THE HIGH-PEAKED BLACK HAT, the exciting novelet by Stephen Payne featured in the next issue of POPULAR WESTERN.

In the Stillman home at Jimcrack, Idaho, Mrs. Stillman received a letter stating that Rip Carson was dead and the R C outfit was in the hands of his son, Henry, and his daughter, Marjorie, who wished to right old wrongs and injustices.

So Mrs. Stillman's son Brad headed for

(Turn page)

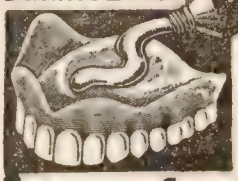
EYE-GLASSES by MAIL as Low as $2.95
Send No Money!
16-Day Trial Offer
NEWEST STYLES
FREE Scientific Sight Test Chart and Catalog. Write today.
U.S. EYE-GLASSES CO. 1557 MILWAUKEE AVENUE Dept. 3-82, CHICAGO, ILL.

Thanks, I can eat Steak again!

•Fit-Rite •makes •FALSE •TEETH •tight!

Fit-Rite

REFITS and RELINES DENTAL PLATES!



Makes False Teeth TIGHT!
Improved Newest Plastic Reliner

Lasts for Months!

FIT-RITE quickly makes loose, slipping, clattery dental plates fit snugly and comfortably. Eat, talk and laugh naturally and confidently!

FIT-RITE you apply—at Home

Simply squeeze FIT-RITE on your dental plate and put it in your mouth, where it hardens and makes false teeth feel and fit like new. No fuss, no muss—no heating. Not a paste or powder. Becomes a part of plate. You apply it yourself.

FIT-RITE IS 100% O.K. ON ANY DENTAL PLATE

FIT-RITE won't harm any denture or your gums. Tasteless, odorless, sanitary—cleanses and sweetens the mouth and helps prevent gum soreness. It won't come off with scrubbing or washing. EVERY APPLICATION GUARANTEED TO LAST FOR MONTHS or NO COST.

SEND NO MONEY Send for a tube today, for only $1.00. Use coupon below. Enjoy teeth like new again. 100% satisfaction guaranteed or money back.

FREE TRIAL Offer!

SPECIAL—generous package of dental plate cleanser included absolutely free. This instant, brushless cleanser WORKS LIKE MAGIC and will not harm any denture. Try Fit-Rite first.

FIT-RITE CO. 1573 MILWAUKEE AVENUE Dept. 3-82, Chicago 22, Ill.

Mail This COUPON

FIT-RITE COMPANY Dept. 3-82
1573 Milwaukee Ave., Chicago 22, Ill.

Send 1 tube of FIT-RITE Dental Plate Reliner that you guarantee to satisfy 100% or it won't cost me a penny.

☐ I will deposit $1.00 plus postage with postman when package arrives.
☐ Enclosed is $1.00. You pay postage.

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

CITY.....STATE.....

P.S.:—☐ RUSH THIS ORDER TODAY!

Offers Big Money — Independence

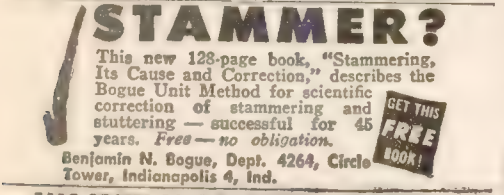
If you are mechanically inclined—can hold and use tools it will pay you to learn electrical appliance repairing. Operate from your garage, basement, etc. Work as many hours as you wish—the appliance repairman is his own boss. On many types of repairs it is usual for a repairman to charge on the basis of $5.00 to $6.00 an hour!

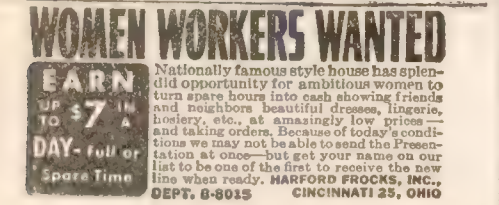
No Previous Experience Needed

Profusely illustrated our new course shows you in simple, easy to understand language plus drawings and photographs, how to make each repair on refrigerators, vacuum cleaners, washing machines, motors, fans, irons, etc., etc. Explains and gives you a working knowledge of electricity, welding, nickel plating, etc. Shows you how to build the power tools you need and how to solicit and keep business coming to you. Not a theory course but an honest to goodness practical course written by and used by repairmen the country over. Price of course is so low that the savings on your own household appliances will pay for it. Act now! Send today for FREE literature. Christy Supply Co., 2835 N. Central Ave., Dept. D-1204, Chicago 34, Illinois.

Latest Styles
EYE GLASSES
ORDER BY MAIL
16 DAYS TRIAL
AS LOW AS $1.89 A PAIR
MONEY BACK Guarantee
Your money refunded if not entirely satisfied with glasses.
SEND NO MONEY
FREE Catalog and Eye Chart. Write today. Take advantage of big money savings. We repair broken glasses. Fill prescriptions.
MODERN STYLE SPECTACLES, INC.
53 W. Jackson Blvd., Dept. M-31, Chicago, Ill.

PICTURE RING $1.
Exquisite Onyx-like Picture Ring—made from any photo. Send No Money! Mail photo with paper strip for ring size. Pay postman only $1.00 plus postage. Send tinted 25c extra. Photo returned with ring. Money back guarantee. Send photo and ring size now.
PORTRAIT RING CO., Dept. T-26, CINCINNATI, O.
Made from Any Photo or Picture! SEND NO MONEY!


STAMMER?
This new 128-page book, "Stammering, Its Cause and Correction," describes the Bogue Unit Method for scientific correction of stammering and stuttering — successful for 45 years. Free — no obligation.
Benjamin N. Bogue, Dept. 4264, Circle Tower, Indianapolis 4, Ind.
GET THIS FREE BOOK!


WOMEN WORKERS WANTED
EARN UP TO $7 IN A DAY- Full or Spare Time
Nationally famous style house has splendid opportunity for ambitious women to turn spare hours into cash showing friends and neighbors beautiful dresses, lingerie, hosiery, etc., at amazingly low prices — and taking orders. Because of today's conditions we may not be able to send the Presentation at once—but get your name on our list to be one of the first to receive the new line when ready. HARFORD FROCKS, INC.,
DEPT. B-8035 CINCINNATI 25, OHIO

the range, where, twenty-four years ago, his father had lost his cattle, his homestead and his life.

Brad knew that Marjorie and Henry Carson were Rip's children by his second wife. An older half-brother, Rip Carson, Junior, had become an outlaw about whom very little was known except that he always wore a high-peaked black hat—a sombrero of the Mexican type.

Young Brad Stillman rode to the R C, and when he reached there his first look at the ranch told him that here was a real cow spread. Brad met a cold reception from Henry Carson when he talked to the dark stocky young man about the letter that had been signed by Marjorie.

"Those letters were sent to a lot of folks but they were not sanctioned by us Carsons nor by the executor of the estate, Fred Riddle," Henry told Brad. "Marjorie didn't write 'em. We're not sacrificing the R C or any part of it. Is that clear?"

"Clear as a mountain lake, Henry. What Rip Carson stole, you kids intend to keep, regardless of this letter and others like it?"

"That's right," says Henry. "So long, Stillman."

Brad resented being ordered off the ranch, and protested, but when a couple of hard looking waddies appeared to back up the owner he decided he had better leave.

Back in the hills Brad meets a man in a high-peaked black hat. It is young Rip Carson, and from the outlaw Brad learns there is crooked work going on at the R C.

The man Brad met there, and thought was Henry Carson, is an imposter pretending to be the son. The girl was taken away from the ranch during the night.

There are many angles to the plotting of the villians and when Brad and Rip Carson go into action to clear things up they find they have plenty of trouble on their hands! How they work things out makes THE HIGH-PEAKED BLACK HAT a novelet that packs plenty of thrills! It's a jim-dandy yarn packed with action.

The two fighting lawmen of Indian county once again go into action in BUZZARDS FLY SOUTH, the smashing Painted Post novelet by Tom Gunn which is also in the next issue.

Sheriff Blue Steel and Deputy Shorty Watts find they have to solve a range mystery when buzzards lead them to a dead man. The corpse is that of a relation of Barnsdall, a cattle dealer, and finding out just why the man was drygulched presents a baffling problem to the sheriff of Painted Post. The way in which Blue Steel solves it makes mighty good reading!

Next comes A TEXAN RIDES MONTANA, a swift-moving novelet by Gunnison Steele,

also in the next issue. Johnny Thor, fighting waddy, rides to rescue his partner from a well-guarded outlaw ranch and heads right into gun-roaring trouble. There is plenty of action and suspense all the way through in this fast-paced novelet.

Of course there will also be a carefully selected assortment of shorter stories of the rangeland and other interesting features in the next issue of POPULAR WESTERN. Plenty of grand reading pleasure for everyone!

OUR LETTER BOX

WHEN our readers finish following the exploits of the various characters in any issue of POPULAR WESTERN, they naturally form an opinion of the stories right then and there. And it's those opinions we want to know about—because they're mighty helpful to us in planning future issues for your entertainment.

Write and tell us which stories you enjoyed most and about those that did not appeal to you. We are eager to give you the best in Western fiction, and knowing just what you like sure puts us on the right track.

Please address all your letters and postcards to The Editor, POPULAR WESTERN, 10 East 40th Street, New York, 16, N. Y.

Now let's take a look at some of our mail. Here are excerpts from just a few of the epistles recently received:

I have read two issues of POPULAR WESTERN and have enjoyed each one no end. I like especially the Sheriff Blue Steele novelets. For instance, THE BORDER CODE, in the September issue. It kept you in suspense up to the very end! Another good mystery-Western was A RIVAL OF BILLY THE KID.—*Jim Bowman, Oak Park, Ill.*

Though I'm a girl, I enjoy reading POPULAR WESTERN and I want to congratulate W. C. Tuttle on his yarn, A RIVAL OF BILLY THE KID. His characters aren't the usual obvious types, which makes reading the story that much more enjoyable. DEATH OF A CHIEFTAIN and THE BORDER CODE were also tops. Its a swell magazine, well worth reading time. —*Shirley Conn, Hancock, N. Y.*

I am writing to tell you how much I like POPULAR WESTERN. I prefer the Buffalo Billy Bates stories though I also like the Blue Steele yarns.—*Wana Hammett, Flint, Mich.*

I have just finished reading the September issue of POPULAR WESTERN. I think A RIVAL OF BILLY THE KID was a humdinger and I hope that W. C. Tuttle will write some more yarns like that.—*Danvell Matney, Portland, Oregon.*

Just got my first copy of POPULAR WESTERN. I enjoyed it—especially COWTOWN CLEAN-UP and BOSS OF INDIAN BUTTE. DEAD OUTLAW'S BOOTS is good, too. In fact the stories are all so good that I'm going to get every issue after this.—*Alden Lind, Twin Points Resort, Two Harbors, Minn.*

That's about all for now. Thanks to each and every one of you for your interest in this magazine, and let's hear from more of you! See you all next issue.

—THE EDITOR.

Every Picture-Story True in REAL LIFE COMICS—Only 10c at all Stands!

NEW SECURITY PLAN PAYS HOSPITAL & DOCTOR BILLS . . .
Costs only 3¢ a day!

PROTECTS YOU IN CASE OF SICKNESS OR ACCIDENT

INDIVIDUAL or FAMILY
Insure NOW, before it's too late! Protect your savings against Hospital expense. Here's an amazing offer of safe, dependable coverage under America's most popular Hospitalization Plan. Family or individual eligible. No Medical Examination. When sickness or accident strikes, you may go to any Hospital in U. S. or Canada under any Doctor's care. YOUR EXPENSES WILL BE PAID exactly as Policy specifies. Many exceptional coverages included. The Company is under supervision of the Insurance Dept. No agent will call.

CASH BENEFITS INCLUDE
Hospital Room & Board Sickness or Accident Per Day Up to $6.00
Doctor Visits In Case of Accident Per Visit $3.00
Surgical Operations Up to $150.00
Time Lost from Work in Case of Accident Per Week $25.00
Accidental Death Up to $2000.00
Physical Disbursement. Up to $2000.00

MAIL COUPON AT ONCE!

NORTH AMERICAN MUTUAL INSURANCE CO.
Dept. TG6-3, Wilmington, Del.
Please send me, without obligation, details about your "3c A Day Hospitalization Insurance Plan"
Name.....
Address.....
City..... State.....

DRAW for MONEY

BE AN ARTIST!

Trained Artists are Capable of Earning $30, $50, $75 a week

Use Your Spare Time to Prepare for a Profitable Art Career! COMMERCIAL ART, DESIGNING and CARTOONING —*all in ONE complete home study course.* No previous Art experience necessary — we teach you step by step — hundreds have profited by our practical method. TWO ART OUTFITS FURNISHED. Colorful, FREE BOOK. "Art for Pleasure & Profit"—tells all about our course, service, what our graduates say—and commercial opportunities for you in Art. Mail coupon today.

FREE BOOK gives details!

WASHINGTON SCHOOL OF ART
Studio 663-C, 1115 15th St., N.W., Wash. 5, D. C.
Send me your booklet and full particulars about your course.

Name ..... AGE.....
Address .....
City ..... State.....

MECHANICS • HOME STUDY

Step up your own skill with the facts and figures of your trade. Audels Mechanics Guides contain Practical Inside Trade Information in a handy form. Fully Illustrated and Easy to Understand. Highly Endorsed. Check the book you want for 7 days' Free Examination. Send No Money. Nothing to pay postman. ☐ Refrigeration $4 • ☐ Radio $4 ☐ Pumps & Hydraulics $4 • ☐ Machinist $4 • ☐ Diesel $2 ☐ Plumbers $6 • ☐ Shipfitter $1 • ☐ Welders $1 • ☐ Auto $4 ☐ Mathematics $2 • ☐ Electricity $4 • ☐ Carpenters $3 ☐ Marine $4 • ☐ Blueprint $2 • ☐ Sheet Metal $1.
If satisfied you pay only $1 a month until price is paid.
AUDEL, Publishers, 49 W. 23 St., New York 10, N. Y.

"For The SPARK That NEVER Fails"
At drug and cigar stores, PX and
Your Lighter Will WORK ...better—with
RUMIN
Gold Coated FLINTS
and LIGHTER FLUID
ROCK FLINT CO., 123 Doughty Boulevard, Far Rockaway, N. Y.

PRINT ANY PHOTO
on Paper, Cloth, Leather or Wood

SIMPLE, EASY TO USE

Magic liquid takes only 2 minutes to reproduce any snapshot you have on to stationery, handkerchiefs, ties, scarfs, etc. Won't wash off. Won't hurt negative or fabric it's used on. Personalize your belongings! An ideal gift. Complete outfit enough to transfer 100 photos—only $1.00 postpaid. Sent C.O.D. for $1.21.

CHRISTY PHOTO SUPPLY
2835 N. Central Dept. 1719, Chicago 34

Lemon Juice Recipe Checks Rheumatic Pain Quickly

If you suffer from rheumatic, arthritis or neuritis pain, try this simple inexpensive home recipe that thousands are using. Get a package of Ru-Ex Compound, a two-week supply, today. Mix it with a quart of water, add the juice of 4 lemons. It's easy. No trouble at all and pleasant. You need only 3 tablespoonfuls two times a day. Often within 48 hours —sometimes overnight—splendid results are obtained. If the pains do not quickly leave and if you do not feel better, return the empty package and Ru-Ex will cost you nothing to try as it is sold by your druggist under an absolute money-back guarantee. Ru-Ex Compound is for sale and recommended by druggists everywhere.

THE SPIRIT OF LOST RIVER

(Concluded from page 83)

was leading an Indian maiden by the hand. She wore the long buckskin garment of a bride, cunningly embroidered with beads.

"It is Little Otter," Running Wolf said solemnly. "And he brings—Happy Flower!"

"It is so, my brothers," Little Otter said with quiet dignity. "The Great Spirit is no longer angry, and he has sent more meat. It is in my canoe not far from here!"

"Speak, Happy Flower!" Gray Eagle commanded the Indian girl. "You are not a—spirit?"

"I have returned from the Spirit world," and Happy Flower recited the things Billy Bates had taught her. "I am not a spirit, but I will be the bride of Little Otter!"

Gray Eagle looked sharply at Buffalo Billy Bates who sat on the Council blanket.

"You were very sure, Chief Long Hair," the Shaman said softly, and shook his head from side to side.

"My medicine is very strong," Billy Bates answered quietly. "Before the feast, you were saying—"

"I have spoken!" Gray Eagle repeated with a sigh. "The Great Spirit is not angry with his children. Happy Flower shall be the bride of Little Otter, who will succeed me as Shaman of the tribe when the Great Spirit calls me to him!"

"Make arrangements for the wedding at once," Billy Bates suggested, and again he raised his hand with the palm up. "The Thunder Bird is sending rain, and Little Otter will show the hunters where there is plenty of game."

Gray Eagle watched as Buffalo Billy stretched to his feet. The young hunter shook his head, and his long brown hair touched his broad shoulders. He walked over to his bay horse, gathered up the reins, and mounted with an agile leap.

"You go now?" Gray Eagle asked, and there was wistfulness in his voice.

"I go now," Billy Bates answered with a nod. "The Great Spirit lives in the Flying Horse down in the canyon of Lost River. He is very beautiful, that golden horse. If the Great Spirit wills it, we will be friends. For that golden one is the Spirit of Lost River!"

The Best in Picture Entertainment

SEE

Only 10c at All Stands!

WOULD YOU GAMBLE 3¢ TO WIN HAPPINESS?

THREE CENTS—the price of a postage stamp—is not much of a gamble, and the stakes are high!

If you are discontented, unhappy, not getting ahead . . . if you are worried about rising living costs and what you are going to do when the war is over . . . if you want to feel equal to other people mentally and financially . . . then you will want to know something about the easy to use principles of self-improvement taught by the Mayan Order. Many people who have used this secret system claim wonderful improvement in mind power. Some give credit to Mayan teachings for helping gain new love from wives or husbands. Many say that now, for the first time, they can face the future with confidence and without fear. Others tell of astonishing new health.

The Mayan Order is a secret brotherhood which bases its teachings on the traditional wisdom of that mysterious race of astrologers and temple builders, the ancient Mayans of Mexico and Central America. They deal with the problem of making PRAYERS work; how to use your subconscious mind, and thousands of other practical, helpful suggestions.

Rose Dawn, Official Scribe, The Mayan Order

Rose Dawn, brilliant radio personality known to millions, wants others to benefit from Mayanry as she has done!

If you are an average man or woman who is in a rut financially and mentally, the cost of a postage stamp may alter your whole life. All you are gambling is 3c—so you can't lose.

The Mayan Order will be glad to send a copy of their FREE book, Mayan Mysteries, which explains Mayan teachings. It tells of the surprising accomplishments of your own mind and how to put cosmic power on YOUR side. There is no obligation in mailing the coupon. You decide for yourself what to do after you read the FREE book, Mayan Mysteries. Don't just sit and wait and wish for a better life—DO SOMETHING. Mail coupon NOW.

THE MAYAN ORDER
BOX 836, Dept. HOF,
San Antonio, Texas

I want you to show me what the Mayan Order has actually done for others. Please send me your FREE book. This places me under no obligation whatever.

Name.....

Address.....

City.....State.....

THE OLDEST ESTABLISHED FIRM IN THE UNITED STATES SELLING EYE GLASSES BY MAIL

GLASSES as LOW as $1.95 PAIR

16 DAYS TRIAL

Choice of the LATEST STYLES—remarkably LOW PRICES. SATISFACTION GUARANTEED or your money back. If you are not satisfied—they will not cost you a cent.

SEND NO MONEY - Write for FREE catalog today showing all of our many styles and LOW PRICES

BROKEN GLASSES REPAIRED AT LOW COST

ADVANCE SPECTACLE CO.
537 S. Dearborn St. Dept. T-3 Chicago, Ill.

PIMPLES
Disappeared Overnight

Blackheads, Too, Went Fast. Yes, it is true, there is a safe, harmless, medicated liquid called KLEEREX that dries up pimples over night, as it acts to loosen and remove ugly blackheads. Those who followed simple directions and applied Kleerex upon retiring were amazingly surprised when they found their pimples and blackheads had disappeared. These users enthusiastically praise Kleerex and claim they are no longer embarrassed and are now happy with their clear complexions. Don't lose out on any more dates, don't miss any more fun. Use Kleerex tonight. If the first application doesn't prove to you that your complexion is 100% better, you get DOUBLE your money back. There is no risk so do not hesitate. Send only $1.00 for 2 full size packages. (Few cents extra for C.O.D.) Write today to:
KLEEREX CO., Dept. 15-C, 2005 S. Michigan, Chicago 16, Ill.

If Ruptured Try This Out

Modern Protection Provides Great Comfort and Holding Security

Without Tortuous Truss Wearing

An "eye-opening" revelation in sensible and comfortable reducible rupture protection may be yours for the asking, without cost or obligation. Simply send name and address to William S. Rice, Inc., Dept. 1-W, Adams, N. Y., and full details of the new and different Rice Method will be sent you Free. Without hard flesh-gouging pads or tormenting pressure, here's a Support that has brought joy and comfort to thousands—by releasing them from Trusses with springs and straps that bind and cut. Designed to securely hold a rupture up and in where it belongs and yet give freedom of body and genuine comfort. For full information—write today!

Beautifully styled watches of superb quality. New and handsome. Made by Swiss craftsmen, leaders in fine watch making. Attractive, adjustable Genuine Leather band. Easy-to-read dial. Precision built. Stainless Steel Back. You'll be delighted! Attractive Gift Box.

Satisfaction Guaranteed or Money Back

SEND NO MONEY. Write today. Tell us whether you want the men's sturdy, dependable wrist watch, or the ladies' dainty, exquisite wrist watch. Simply pay postman C.O.D. plus postage and 10% Federal Tax. Limited quantity. Get yours quick. Written Guarantee With Every Order.

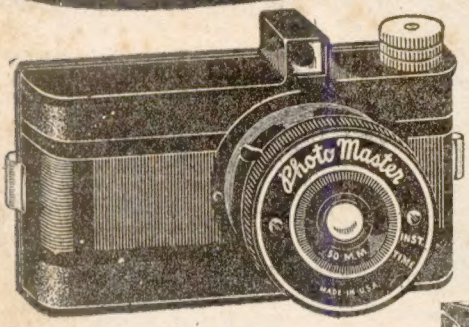
International Diamond Co., 2251 Calumet Ave., Dept. 442, Chicago 16, Ill.

Calling All Camera Fans!

Genuine Photo Master CANDID CAMERA

The Ideal Gift For Mother, Dad, Sis or Brother

$3.98 POST PAID



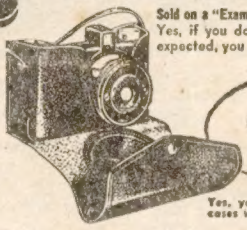
TAKE PICTURES YOU WILL TREASURE!

Imagine getting a genuine Photo Master with a *ground* and *pitch polished lens* in the face of one of the most drastic camera shortages in our history! A camera designed to take pictures in *full color* as well as black and white! A camera that will enable you to graphically record the events and people of the present for you to enjoy in the future. Yes, start today to take pictures of things as they happen. It's a real thrill that will bring you reflected pleasures for years to come. So order your Photo Master *now!* And if after the postman delivers it you don't think the $3.98 you paid for it is the best $3.98 you've ever spent—return it within 10 days and we'll refund your money cheerfully—and *quick as a flash!*

Sold on a "Examine At Our Risk" GUARANTEE OF SATISFACTION
Yes, if you don't feel that Photo Master is everything you expected, you may return it in 5 days for a complete refund.

Look At These Features

- ★ Genuine Simpson Ground Pitch Polished Lens
- ★ Extremely Simple Foolproof Operation
- ★ Takes 16 Pictures on any Standard No. 127 Film
- ★ Also Takes Pictures in Full Color
- ★ Level View Finder



This Made-To-Measure CARRYING CASE only 2c with purchase of Camera

Yes, you can have one of these made-to-measure carrying cases worth 75c for only 2c with every camera ordered.

As New As Atomic Energy!

The "Years Ahead" MIRACLE LIGHTER

Flame-in-a-Flash

IMPERIAL LITEMASTER

$3.50 POST PAID

Read This Absolute Three-Way GUARANTEE

ONE—if after you receive your Litemaster you don't think it's the greatest lighter ever made at the price you may return it in 5 days for a complete refund.

TWO—If your Litemaster fails to perform perfectly any time within 90 days we will replace it for you absolutely free.

THREE—We'll keep your Litemaster in perfect working order *forever* for only 35c to cover all postage and handling costs.

One Flick Does The Trick

It's New! It's Different! It's Perfect!

No *two* ways about it! Litemaster's amazing *single* action pops it open *already lit!* No more smudged, bruised fingers from spinning friction wheels to *maybe* get a light. Flame-in-a-flash Litemaster has all the features of expensive lighters *plus*. Its just-right size fits your hand as comfortably as a fine watch; has fuel capacity for "A Thousand and One Lights" per filling; its new spun-glass wick provides a lifetime of service without change. No other lighter at *any* price can match Litemaster at its *low* price. Thousands who have suffered bruised fingers and flustered tempers trying to *coax* a light out of outdated lighters will welcome this chance to prove Litemaster's sure-fire, simplified superiority at our risk.

WE CHALLENGE COMPARISON WITH LIGHTERS SELLING FOR $10 OR MORE

COMPARE it for sure-fire simplified action — for instant flame—for lasting performance.

COMPARE it for beauty of design — for streamlined perfection of size and weight.

COMPARE it with the *best* you can find at *any* price — give it any test . . . anywhere.

MAIL THIS COUPON FOR LITEMASTER

NATIONAL NOVELTIES—Dept. LM9
608 So. Dearborn St., Chicago 5, Ill.

Please rush my Litemaster with Lifetime Spun Glass Wick and three extra flints. If not delighted I may return in 5 days for refund.

CHECK ONE

☐ I am enclosing $3.50. Send my Litemaster POSTPAID
☐ Send my Litemaster C.O.D. I will pay postman $3.50 plus postage

Name_____
Please Print Clearly
Address_____
City_____ Zone____ State_____

MAIL THIS COUPON FOR CAMERA

NATIONAL NOVELTIES—Dept. PC163
608 South Dearborn St.—Chicago 5, Ill.

Rush Photomaster at $3.98 with Carrying Case for only 2c extra. Satisfaction guaranteed or money back if returned within 10 days.

CHECK ONE

☐ I am enclosing $4 for payment in full. Send Camera and Case Postpaid.
☐ Send Camera and Case C.O.D. I will pay postman $4 plus postage costs.
If you want 3 rolls of No. 127 Film (enough for 48 pictures) for only 81c plus 15c postage and handling costs CHECK BELOW.
☐ I am enclosing $4.96 for payment in full. Include 3 rolls of Film postpaid.
☐ Include 3 rolls of Film C.O.D. I will pay postman $4.96 plus postage.

Name_____
Please Print Clearly.
Address_____
City_____ Zone____ State_____

She Knew What She Wanted

. . . and she stopped at nothing to get it!

ELLEN BERENT was one of the world's most breath-takingly desirable women. But beneath a loveliness that made men gasp was the soul of a tigress —with a ferocity that knew no bounds; respected no laws; tore to shreds the lives of every man, woman, or child whose most innocent action aroused her insane jealousy!

No wonder the *New York Times* stated that *Leave Her to Heaven* (the million-copy best-seller you can now have FREE) "will hypnotize you until you have turned the last page!" For here is a woman whose turbulent career will hold you spellbound. Her whole being flames into deadly rage if she is forced to share even a tiny part of a man's love with anyone else—or with any *thing*.

Her devouring love gorged itself like a wild animal after a jungle triumph. Her lies and betrayals tore the heartstrings of others with crafty cunning. Her jealousy —as wracking as a never-ending heart-burn—bit like acid into every life that touched her own. This woman, who gave too little and took too much, stopped at *nothing* to get what she wanted!

BOTH FREE—This MILLION-COPY Best-seller Which Has Just Been Made Into A Smash-Hit Movie

Leave Her to Heaven

and ALSO

SHORT STORIES OF De MAUPASSANT

Rachel—who avenged France for a German kiss!

LEAVE HER TO HEAVEN is one of the most fascinating love stories of our time. And now you may have it—FREE—as a New Membership Gift from "America's Biggest Bargain Book Club"!

In addition, you ALSO receive, FREE, *Short Stories of De Maupassant,* containing over fifty tales of love, hate, intrigue, jealousy and madness—complete and unexpurgated, the most realistic stories of their kind ever written!

Read of the girl called *Ball-of-Fat,* and the sacrifice she made for those who were supposedly "her betters."

Read *Love, Mademoiselle Fifi, Story of a Farm Girl*—and all the best works of this master of realism!

Our Double-Gift to You -- Both These Books FREE

Each month ONE of the Book League's selections is a modern best-seller by a famous author like Ben Ame Williams, Somerset Maugham, Ernest Hemingway—selling for $2.50 and up in the publisher's edition.

AND EVERY MONTH YOU RECEIVE A BONUS BOOK—a masterpiece of immortal literature. These classics are *uniformly bound.* They grow into a handsome lifetime *matched* library. The great authors in this series include Shakespeare, Poe, Balzac, Zola, etc.

This club builds for you a library containing the best of the new best-sellers AND the best of the older masterpieces.

You Do NOT Have to Take Every Selection

The NEW book plus the BONUS book sent you each month are valued at $3.50 to $4.00 in the publisher's edition. But you get BOTH for only $1.49!

You do NOT have to accept each monthly selection and BONUS book; only six of **your own choice** during the year to fulfill your membership requirement. There are no membership dues; no further cost or obligation.

Accept This Trial Membership - No Obligation

Send the coupon without money. Read these two gift books for five days. If they do **not** convince you that this IS "America's Biggest Bargain Book Club," simply return them; pay nothing. But if these volumes DO demonstrate that subscribing to the Book League is the wisest move a reader can make today, then keep them as a gift; your subscription will begin with next month's new selection and BONUS book. Mail coupon for your TWO FREE BOOKS **NOW! BOOK LEAGUE OF AMERICA, Dept. TG3, Garden City, N. Y.**

Mail this coupon to **BOOK LEAGUE OF AMERICA**
Dept. TG3, Garden City, N. Y.

Please send me — FREE — **Leave Her to Heaven** and **Short Stories of De Maupassant.** Within 5 days I may return them if I wish, without cost or obligation. Otherwise, I will keep them as a gift, and continue to receive forthcoming new monthly selections and BONUS books—at only $1.49 plus few cents postage, for BOTH books.

However, I do NOT have to accept each month's new selection and BONUS book; only six **of my own choice** during the year to fulfill my membership requirement. There are no membership dues for me to pay; no further cost or obligation.

MR. }
MRS. } _____
MISS } (Please print plainly)

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ Zone No. (if any) _____ STATE _____

Occupation _____ Age, please, if under 21 _____

☐ HANDSOME DE LUXE BINDING: Check box if you wish your masterpieces (monthly BONUS books) in simulated leather, silver stamped, for only 40c extra monthly. We will then also send your FREE gift copy of **Short Stories of De Maupassant** in this binding—at no extra charge.

Slightly higher in Canada. Address 105 Bond St., Toronto 2, Can.

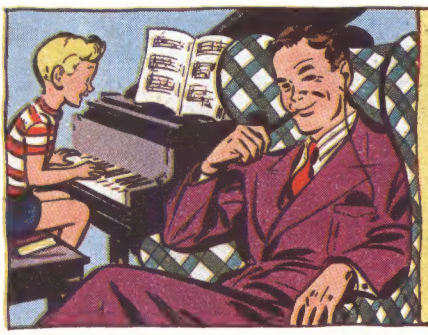
"VEST POCKET" POWER

Wartime battery research packs giant power into midget space

ELECTRONIC experts have lately outdone themselves in giving us "vest pocket" reception. They have made possible hearing aids easily concealed in the palm of the hand. They have designed radios the size of a cigarette case. And now they give us a postwar edition of the amazing Handie-Talkie—famed GI sending and receiving set.

A key to these accomplishments is "Eveready" batteries. One of these storerooms of power, the "Eveready" "Mini-Max" battery, weighs only 1½ ounces. Yet, size for size, it is the most powerful "B" battery ever made.

HANDIE-TALKIE—five pounds of concentrated two-way radio. Powered with "Mini-Max" batteries, it will be ideal, when available, for fire fighting, flood control, big construction jobs, exploring, auto racing.



BREAST-POCKET HEARING AID—lets Dad hear those first tunes. It is 4¾ by 2½ inches, weighs but 6 ounces. Yet, its "Mini-Max" "B" Battery—available now—has phenomenally long life and amazing economy.

SIZED LIKE A CIGARETTE CASE, this radio is easily carried. Personal earphone permits listening without bothering others. Strong, day-long reception, thanks to the tiny, powerful "Mini-Max" battery, already available at dealers.

An "Eveready" "Mini-Max" Battery—22½ volts of power—nestling in a hand with an "Eveready" Flashlight Battery. Unique construction of the "Mini-Max" battery packs more power into smaller space than ever before.

For longer life, insist on "Eveready" batteries—dated to assure freshness. And fresh batteries last longer!

EVEREADY

TRADE-MARK

The registered trade-marks "Eveready" and "Mini-Max" distinguish products of National Carbon Company, Inc.